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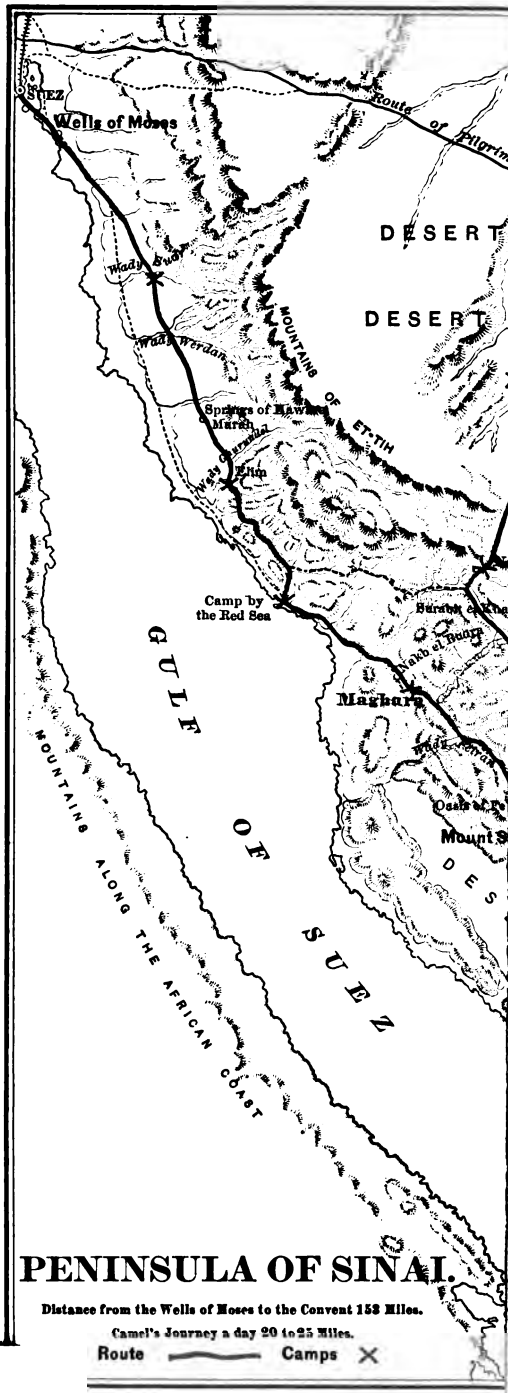
SUEZ
Wells of Moses
Route of Pilgrim
DESERT
DESERT
Wady Budr
Wady Werdan
MOUNTAINS OF ET-TIH
Springs of Hawara
Marah
Wady Gharandal
Elim
Camp by the Red Sea
Bir
Nakb el Beida
Magharah
Wady Gharandal
Oasis of Fe
Mount S
DES
GULF OF SUEZ
MOUNTAINS ALONG THE AFRICAN COAST
PENINSULA OF SINAI.
Distance from the Wells of Moses to the Convent 153 Miles.
Camel's Journey a day 20 to 25 Miles.
Route
Camps

ON THE DESERT:

WITH A BRIEF REVIEW OF

RECENT EVENTS IN EGYPT.

BY HENRY M. FIELD, D.D.

AUTHOR OF "FROM THE LAKES OF KILLARNEY TO THE GOLDEN HORN,"
AND "FROM EGYPT TO JAPAN."

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To George E. Post M. D.

PROFESSOR OF SURGERY AND BOTANY

IN THE SYRIAN PROTESTANT COLLEGE AT BEIRUT,

My Companion on the Desert,

'IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED THIS STORY

OF OUR WANDERINGS TOGETHER.

PREFACE.

The Peninsula of Sinai has been a favorite ground of Biblical explorers. In their zeal to visit scenes made dear by connection with sacred history, they have sought to follow the track of the children of Israel from the time of their departure out of Egypt; to trace their marches on the desert; and to fix the place of their encampments, not only around the base of Sinai, but even when wandering and almost lost in the Great and Terrible Wilderness. The fruit of these researches is a Library of Exploration, which forms a most valuable addition to our Biblical Literature, not only for the knowledge it gives of sacred geography, but of the whole religious, social, and political economy of the Hebrews.

While these great works, the monuments of so much learning, occupy the attention of scholars, other readers may be interested in turning over a Portfolio of Sketches, which claims only to present a few Pictures of the Desert. The Peninsula is as unique in its scenery as in its history—combining the three great features of the desert, the mountains and the sea; the sands, the cliffs, and the rolling waters—all which have a peculiar fascination when seen in a pure, transparent atmosphere, with the lights and shadows of sunrisings and sunsettings. Passing through such a country, not as an explorer, but only as a traveller, the writer has been content to accept what came within his personal observation, and to describe only what he could

see with his own eyes. The notes which are here written out were all taken on the spot, often in the most difficult circumstances—in the tent at the close of day, when wearied with a long march; or at noon, resting under a cliff, in "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land"; on the shore of the sea, or on the tops of mountains. Sometimes, as he passed over a point of view which commanded a wide sweep of the horizon, he could only rein in his camel, and sketch the scene from the saddle. Pictures thus taken, if they have no other merit, may have that of a literal fidelity, and imperfect as they are, may perhaps impart a little of the glow of enthusiasm which the scenes themselves enkindled in him who attempts to describe them, and thus lead some to follow in his steps; while to others he would hope that these lighter sketches may serve as an introduction to those great works, which are not only of absorbing interest, but rich in learning and instruction.

Once only in the following pages is the simple narrative—the detail of incidents of tent-life, of the camp and the march, or the description of scenes on the mountain and the desert—interrupted to introduce a defence of the Hebrew Law. This may be thought quite unnecessary. But it has become such a fashion of the day to question, not only the inspiration of Moses, but his wisdom as a Lawgiver, and even his humanity, that one who was loyal to that great name could hardly refrain from some reflections which naturally arose under the cliffs of Sinai.

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ON THE DESERT.

CHAPTER I.

EGYPT IN THE SPRING OF 1882.

The war had not yet come. For months there had been rumors of trouble in Egypt; the English papers were full of accounts of tumult and disorder; there had been a military revolution; troops had surrounded the Palace of the Khedive, and compelled a change of Ministry; all power was in the hands of the army; constitutional authority was destroyed, and the country was drifting into anarchy. Such reports created a feeling of alarm in Europe, and many travellers who had proposed to spend a Winter on the Nile, remained in the South of France, or in Italy. I left Naples with some apprehension, but as we approached Alexandria on the morning of the 16th of February, the sun rose on the same scene as when we had landed there from Constantinople six years before. There was no sign of warlike preparation. Everything had the look of peace and of commercial prosperity. The ships that crowded the harbor showed that we were entering the great maritime city of the East, while there was a faint revival of the ancient splendor in the palaces on the shore. In all this there was nothing to give token of a city that in four short months was to be the scene of a fearful mas-

sacre; and that one month later was to be devoted to destruction.

For the present there was nothing to excite apprehension. I landed at Alexandria with no worse fate than that of being pulled this way and that, as every traveller is, by the Arab boatmen, anxious for the honor of carrying his baggage and receiving his money; and drove to the Hotel de l'Europe on the Place Mehemet Ali, which was the scene of the massacre on the 11th of June; and proceeded to Cairo without incident, stopping at Tantah by the way, where four months later foreigners were dragged out of trains and butchered in cold blood. But as yet all was quiet, and when I found myself once more in Cairo, in my old quarters at the Grand New Hotel, where I had been six years before, sitting on the same balcony overlooking the Ezbekieh Square, and listening to the same music floating up from under the palm trees below, I felt as if I were at home, and gave myself up to the full enjoyment of the most delightful of Eastern cities. For a Winter's residence, there is nothing to equal Cairo. The flood of light, which gives brightness and color to everything; the soft and balmy air, which it is a luxury to breathe; the palms, with their tall trunks and tufted crowns; the old mosques, with their minarets, from which the muezzin calls the faithful to prayer; the endless bazaars, with long-bearded Orientals sitting at the place of custom; the picturesque sights of the streets, with dashing carriages, and lithe and springy syces, dressed in white, with red girdles and velvet caps, running before them, as they ran before the chariot of Pharaoh; and the long processions of camels, making such a contrast with the donkeys, waddling under the weight of fat, turbaned Turks, or of women, sitting astride and covered in black from head to foot, with only a pair of eyes peering out from faces thickly veiled; or ambling along, with English riders

on their backs, and the donkey boys, now belaboring the little beasts, and now helping their own slow steps by dragging at their tails—all these make a variety and change of which one never wearies.

Of course, however short one's visit to Cairo, and however often he has been there before, he must ride out to the Pyramids, to look again with awe and wonder at those mighty monuments of the past; and to Heliopolis, to see the oldest obelisk in Egypt, still standing, as it stood four thousand years ago in front of the Temple of the Sun, where Joseph saw it when he married the daughter of the priest of On; and where Plato studied philosophy, as Moses had studied before him, and became, like him, "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians."

To its attractions in the way of antiquities, Cairo has recently had a great addition in the royal mummies lately discovered at Thebes, which have been brought down the Nile, and placed in the Museum at Boulak, which I visited with Dr. Grant, who is an authority as an Egyptologist. If it is an honor to stand before kings, even dead kings, I had it to the full that day. There I saw the open sarcophagus which holds the mummied body of Rameses II., whose daughter took Moses out of the bulrushes. Dr. Grant has in his private collection a ring, of which he has good reason to believe that it once adorned the finger of Menephtah, the son and successor of Rameses, and the very Pharaoh of the Exodus.

Not less interesting to me, in a different way, was a visit to Dr. Schweinfurth, the distinguished African traveller, who makes his home in Cairo, as the most convenient point from which to make his journeys into the interior of Africa. Here he has gathered his great collections of plants; his walls are lined with charts and maps, on which he kindly traced for me the outlines of his ex-

plorations. I listened with amazement at the simple story. For thousands and thousands of miles, he made his way through swamp and jungle and forest, across deserts and over mountains. "And *how* did you travel?" I asked. "On foot." "With whom?" "Alone!" There is nothing in all the history of exploration more touching than the story of the loss of his treasures. When he had travelled more than two years, and amassed a collection of priceless value, it was destroyed in an hour by the burning of an African village. Then indeed he feared that his reason might give way. To keep his mind in action, he began *keeping a record of his own footsteps* along his lonely and dreary march, and in six months made an actual count of a million and a quarter of steps! Thus he got his mind away from brooding on his loss, and his brain into some sort of regular action. After this, who shall say that courage of the highest kind has died out from among men, or that even this sordid and selfish age of ours cannot produce heroes equal to any found in story? He reckons the Nile to be the longest river in the world, but in the measurement he includes, as a part of the great river of Egypt, certain affluents of the lakes out of which it flows: apart from which it might not equal either the Amazon or the Mississippi.

There was another man whom it was a pleasure to see walking about the streets of Cairo—M. de Lesseps. He was generally leading a child by the hand, one of his second family, the children of his old age. I had met him in America, and he received me very cordially. To my inquiry as to the comparative difficulties of the two great Interoceanic Canals with which his name is connected, he answered without hesitation, that the difficulties of Suez were far greater than of Panama. The former was built in the desert: there were no means of transportation except the backs of camels, until new approaches were con-

structed; new implements of engineering had to be created for the unaccustomed task; even to the end a large part of the excavations had to be made by the fellaheen taking up the sand or the slime in baskets, and carrying it away on the top of their heads! But at Panama a railroad is already built across the mountains, which can transport men and materials to any point. The old man expressed himself as entirely satisfied with the progress of the work, and spoke with absolute assurance of its complete success; he was going out to America the next year to see how far it was advanced, although he was nearly eighty years of age, and had not a doubt that he should live to see the waters of the two oceans flowing together. With such a man it seems indeed as if all ordinary rules were reversed; as if the obstacles of time and nature, which daunt and defeat less ardent spirits, were made to bend to his unconquerable will.

Cairo has many social attractions in the resident European families, and in strangers that come here for the Winter. The American colony is not large, but it is very pleasant. There are no more charming interiors anywhere than in the hospitable homes of General Stone and Judge Batcheller. Dr. Grant, the Scotch physician, is married to an American lady, who is well known for her kindness to strangers and her charities to the poor; she is now greatly interested in the establishment of a hospital, like that at Beirut, under the charge of those Protestant Sisters of Charity, the Deaconesses of Kaiserswerth. The American missionaries, in their new building on the Ezbekieh Square, which includes their chapel and their schools, are working quietly but faithfully to diffuse those elements of knowledge and of Christian faith which are the germ of true civilization. In all these families an American is sure to find a hospitable welcome.

But into whatever circle I went, I found that the one absorbing topic was the political state of Egypt. Since I was here six years ago, on my way round the world, great changes had taken place. Ismail the Magnificent was gone, and Tewfik, his son, reigned in his stead. To give the details of these changes would be a long story. A very brief review is sufficient to render intelligible the course of events, which at last has culminated in war.

If we go back to the origin of the troubles in Egypt, we shall find that what the country is suffering to-day is a bitter inheritance from the past. The misgovernment of Ismail Pacha prepared the way for the difficulties and embarrassments of his son, as the excesses of Louis XIV. and Louis XV. prepared the way for the French Revolution.

But let us not be unjust even to Ismail Pacha. He was a man of great ability, and he rendered services to Egypt which should never be forgotten. But for him we should not have the Suez Canal; at least his share in it was as important as that of M. de Lesseps himself: for while the latter furnished the engineering skill, the former furnished the labor; and if the capital came chiefly from Paris, yet no small part came from Cairo. One-quarter of all that the Khedive received through his foreign loans, it is estimated, went into the construction of the Suez Canal, and thus was paid towards a work which was really of far more benefit to England than to Egypt. The Khedive had a noble ambition for his country, which he wished to take rank among the great powers bordering on the Mediterranean. He had vast schemes of national grandeur. To restore the ancient commerce of Alexandria, he spent great sums in enlarging its harbor; he built here and at Port Said long breakwaters against the sea, and piers and docks and wharves; he had steamers crossing the Mediterranean and on the Red Sea; to revive agriculture, he

dug canals for irrigation to carry the "sweet water" of the Nile to every part of the Delta; he encouraged the raising of cotton and of sugar; while his railroads crossing the country, with trains of cars taking the place of caravans of camels, gave to ancient Egypt, with its temples and its Pyramids, the aspect of modern civilization. Ismail is no longer ruler of Egypt, but these works remain, the enduring monuments of his services to his country.

Could he but have stopped here, he would have had a place in history as one of the greatest rulers of his time. But when could an Oriental prince or potentate be content with labors for the public good? He must needs also surround himself with magnificence and splendor. And so Ismail began building palaces with the same recklessness of cost with which Louis XIV. began building Versailles, only that he had not the wealth of France behind him.

It has been my fortune, or misfortune, to witness the financial collapse of both Turkey and Egypt. I was in Constantinople in the Autumn of 1875, just after Turkey had announced to Europe that she could no longer pay the interest on her bonds. The wild extravagance of the Sultan, wasting untold sums in building palaces, and keeping up his enormous domestic establishment, could have but one issue. To be sure, he paid as long as he could—that is, as long as he could make new debts to pay old ones, or even borrow enough to pay the interest. But a time came when the bankers of London and Paris and Amsterdam were no longer willing to throw their millions into the Bosphorus, and then "there was quickly an end."

The disaster to Turkey was naturally followed by that of Egypt. The credit of both rested on the same hollow foundation. Hardly had we crossed the Mediterranean before we saw the same ruin impending in Cairo that had already come in Constantinople. A long career of extrav-

agance, exhausting the resources of a country that was very poor to begin with, had brought Egypt to the verge of bankruptcy. The crisis was delayed for a time by the purchase of the shares of the Khedive in the Suez Canal by England for four millions sterling. But this could only postpone, it could not prevent, the inevitable ruin.

Seeing the shadow on the wall, Ismail at last humbled himself so far as to ask advice, and applied to England to send out to Cairo a man skilled in finance to investigate his affairs, and if possible restore order and confidence. I was in Cairo at the moment that Mr. Cave appeared on the scene, and began the Herculean task. He soon found that he had no place to stand on ; that he was sinking in a bottomless abyss. It was hard to find out what were really the debts of Egypt, for the Khedive had an ingenious system of bookkeeping—a kind of "double entry"—by which a large part of what came into the treasury went into his own private purse, while debts that were incurred were charged to the State. To disentangle this confused mass of accounts, seemed almost hopeless. To meet these debts, resources of every kind were gone ; the Khedive had taxed the country till it could bear no more ; he had wrested everything from his miserable people ; and thus at the same moment had exhausted his resources at home and his power of borrowing abroad.

It were useless and sickening to follow this steady descent from one depth to another lower still. It is enough to recognize the peculiar and extraordinary circumstances out of which rose the Anglo-French Control, of which we have heard so much. This was an arrangement by which the finances of the country were placed in the hands of French and English Controllers, who were to collect the taxes and pay the interest on the debt. This has been very severely criticized. I confess I do not like it either in principle or in

practice. Partnership in business may be a wise management of affairs, but partnership in government does not work so well. An alliance of two countries which join to control a third, is a sort of double-headed monster, which has no more place in government than in nature. Nature abhors monsters, and so does wise diplomacy or legislation. Especially a joint action between two countries so jealous of each other as France and England, was sure to result sooner or later in misunderstanding and mischief.

Besides, there was an injustice in the thing to which it is very hard to reconcile our American ideas. To make the best of it, it was an anomalous arrangement—one to which neither England nor France, and least of all America, would submit for an instant. Suppose, because English bankers forty years ago lent money on Pennsylvania bonds, which did not prove very remunerative, England should say "Now we will come in and administer the finances of Pennsylvania for a few years until our bondholders are paid in full, principal and interest, with a liberal commission for collecting bad debts, and after that we will give the control back to you," she would receive an answer that would be quite intelligible. This is the charge that is made against England: that she has used all the weight of her national authority to collect debts, and not even debts owed to herself, but to private capitalists, to speculators, who if they lend money to a State like Egypt at enormous interest, ought at least to take their own risks, and not come to the Government to help them out of a bad bargain, for which they have nobody to blame but themselves.

But I do not quite understand the matter so, nor that the Anglo-French Control was imposed upon Egypt by foreign power without her consent and against her will. It was Ismail Pacha who *invited* the help of England and France to get him out of his financial difficulties. He had

got to the end of his rope. Nobody would lend him a shilling. Then it was that England and France said "We will try to raise you up and set you on your legs again, if you will let us manage the finances. Europe will have confidence in us, but it will not in you." This was a pretty hard bargain, but it was the only one that could be made; and bad as it was in principle, yet anything was better than levying taxes (and double taxes) by the bastinado. The change brought immediate relief; the country began to revive. The burden of taxation was still heavy, but at least the people knew what to depend upon: that they were only to be taxed once a year, and the taxes to be collected at a regular time, and in a regular way. There were no more bastinadoings to extort money. Confidence returned; Egyptian bonds rose in all the markets of Europe. But the Control had to deal not only with an impoverished country, but with an imperious and intractable master. Ismail was quite willing that they should come in to relieve him from embarrassment, and to put such a plausible show on his affairs as should enable him to borrow more money; but he had no idea of their placing a check on his extravagance; and so, after chafing for awhile under the restraint, he finally flew into a passion, and told the Controllers to go about their business, and he would manage the finances himself, upon which they appealed to their Governments, who addressed themselves to the Sultan, who politely told the Khedive to go about *his* business, who thereupon embarked with his harem for Naples, where for three years he has had abundant leisure to contemplate the situation.

That, in short, is the whole story of the Anglo-French Control. It was certainly an awkward arrangement, but still, as a temporary expedient, it did immense good. But like many other good things, it ran into an abuse. The Egyptians felt that it was pretty hard to have to pay

interest on a debt of nearly a hundred millions sterling, contracted at an enormous discount, of which the country had received probably not more than fifty per cent.

But this was not all. The Controllers, finding that they had what some would call "a fat place," imported a swarm of foreign officials, to whom they gave the other "fat" places in the financial administration. No sooner was it fairly established in power, than it virtually took possession, not only of the Control of the Finances, but of all the departments of the Government. In the household of the Khedive there were French and Italian secretaries and masters of ceremonies, while Englishmen were employed on the railways and in the postal service. There was the same mingling of nations in the departments of justice and of the interior; in the army and in the police; in the arsenals and military schools; in short, everywhere. A list carefully prepared showed that there were nearly fourteen hundred foreign officials employed in one post and another in the Egyptian Government. A large part of these obtained their positions by the removal of native officials, who in many cases were quite as well qualified as these foreign intruders. General Stone said to me, "Here come these English and French Controllers, who have not only taken the great offices to themselves, with enormous salaries, but have placed under them a large number of foreign subordinates. As one illustration of what they are doing, they have in many instances removed the Copts, who have been scribes in the land from the days of Joseph, and who were the best men to be found for the minor posts of the government, to do the work of special bureaus in the different departments, and filled their places with Englishmen imported from India—'old Indians'—who have been worn out in that country, and now find Egypt a new field of operations. These swarm upon us

like a plague of locusts, and eat out the substance of the land. No wonder that intelligent Egyptians are indignant." This testimony might be received with some abatement, because General Stone had been for years the Chief of Staff to the Khedive, and his sympathies were strongly with the Egyptians. But similar language was used by the American Consul and by all the American residents with whom I conversed. They felt that this virtual appropriation of the government by foreign Controllers, was a gross abuse of trust; that it was a "spoiling of the Egyptians," which they could only regard with disgust and indignation.

Certainly it was a great injustice; but let the blame fall where it belongs. The odium has been thrown upon England, when a careful inquiry shows that it was not the English but the French who took the lion's share of the spoils. Not long since a paper was presented to the House of Commons, giving an accurate report of the number of British subjects in the service of Egypt, which, to the surprise of the public, showed that there were three or four times as many Frenchmen as Englishmen. Among the foreign officials it was found also that there was a large number of Italians, besides a liberal sprinkling of Germans, Roumanians, Greeks, and Syrians.

While the French and English took the financial positions, the Turks took the high places in the army. One cannot understand Egyptian politics without recognizing the fact that Arabs are not Turks; indeed no two peoples regard each other with more intense dislike. They may unite to fight against the infidel; but left to themselves, they would fight with each other, as they did in the days of Mehemet Ali. And yet as Egypt is subject to Turkey, all the best places in its army have been held by aliens, whom the Egyptians at once hate and despise. The

poor fellaheen furnished the rank and file, but all the officers were Turks or Circassians. Thus the Egyptians were ground between the upper and the nether millstone. There was no place for them in the army except as common soldiers, nor in any department of the Government. They could only be hewers of wood or drawers of water to their foreign masters. Out of this double or triple grievance—this Anglo-French-Turkish oppression—grew up the National Party of Egypt: a party which was inspired chiefly by jealousy of foreigners, against whom it raised the rallying cry of "Egypt for the Egyptians."

The first demonstration that brought Arabi Bey to the front as the leader of the National or military party, was not against the English or the French, but against the Turks. In making some promotions in the army, the Minister of War, who was himself a Turk, had given every position of importance to a Turk or a Circassian, utterly ignoring the Arabs, who naturally resented this public degradation, and against which Arabi, who was then but a Bey (a Colonel), and two others of the same rank, united in making a respectful but decided protest. For this remonstrance they were summoned to the Ministry of War. They obeyed, but suspecting foul play, left word with their regiments, if they did not return in two hours, to come and release them by force. At the War Office they were immediately placed under arrest, and as they did not return, their regiments, true to the command, appeared in arms and broke open the doors, and drove out the Minister of War, releasing their Colonels, and carrying them off in triumph. The Khedive, instead of punishing them, condoned their offence, and showed that he rather sympathized with their sense of wrong, by dismissing the obnoxious Minister.

Of course a man who had thus bearded the lion in his den, became immensely popular with the army. He was

regarded as the champion of his race. But his success was his danger, as it tempted him to resort on all occasions to military force. The next demonstration was a more formidable one, being aimed not at an obnoxious individual, but at the whole Ministry, and even at the Khedive himself. On the 9th of September, Arabi appeared at the head of three regiments well armed, with batteries of Krupp guns, with which he marched to the Abdine Palace in Cairo, around which the troops formed with loaded cannon, while Arabi with his staff rode forward to the presence of the Khedive, who stood on the steps of the Palace, and who drew himself up with an appearance of calmness and courage, while the English Controller, who stood by him, leaned over and whispered to him that he should order the rebel to be shot; but as the Khedive himself would have been blown to atoms in an instant, and his English adviser with him, he prudently refrained, and instead asked what the army wanted. Arabi replied, not in the tone of one who offers a petition, but who issues an order, that they demanded three things: that the Ministry should be dismissed; that the pay of the army should be increased; and that an Egyptian Parliament should be summoned to prepare a constitution for the country. The Ministers, who were standing by, saw the hopelessness of resistance, and assented to their own dismissal, which the Khedive accorded on the spot; to the other two demands he could not assent without referring them to the Sultan.

The result was a triumph: the main point had been gained, which would carry the others with it, at which Arabi bowed, the military saluted, and marched off the ground with bands playing in all the exultation of victory.

In all these proceedings the Americans had taken no part. They had no share in the Financial Control, and had neither interest in, nor sympathy with, any measures which seemed

oppressive or unjust; and though they could not but look upon the mode of redress by armed force as a very high-handed proceeding, yet they sympathized with the National party to this extent, that they thought that the Egyptians were very hardly treated; that they had been crowded to the wall; and that the course of France and England towards Egypt, had not been worthy of two powerful nations dealing with a country that was both weak and poor. The knowledge of this sympathy, which was openly expressed, made our countrymen very popular in Cairo; the people appreciated their friendly feeling; they knew that we had not meddled in their affairs, and had no part in the oppressive taxation under which they were suffering; and we were often entertained by hearing their bands strike up our national airs. The culmination of this era of good feeling was at a public demonstration on Washington's birthday, which our Consul, with General Stone and some Americans passing the Winter here, thought it would be a pleasant thing to celebrate. Accordingly they got up a grand dinner at our Hotel, to which they invited all the Ministers of the Khedive. It is not a common thing to see this mingling of Arabs and Europeans, but it would not have excited remark were it not that recent events led many to regard it as a political demonstration, and indeed some who were in official positions felt constrained not to take part in it lest their action might be so interpreted.

However, the dinner came off, and proved an unique affair. It brought together a distinguished company. All the Ministers of the Khedive were present, among whom the greatest curiosity was manifested to see Arabi Bey, the leader in the recent military movement. In leading the army against the Government, he was guilty of an insubordination, for which, had Ismail Pacha been still

Khedive, and felt strong enough, he would undoubtedly have been shot. But in such cases the character of the act is generally judged by its success, and as Arabi Bey had the army at his back, instead of being executed, he was now Minister of War and virtual dictator of Egypt. I was interested to see a man who had acted such a part, and who might be destined either to supreme power or to death, and observed him closely. He is a man of large physique, with a face that is not at all intellectual, but heavy, except his eye, which looks as though it might flash fire if he were once aroused. But his manner was very quiet, and his few words when I conversed with him through an interpreter, were such as might be uttered by any patriotic man. He said he had come out that evening, though not well, to do honor to the memory of a man who had freed his country from a foreign yoke, perhaps thinking in himself that what Washington had done for America, he might do for Egypt.

Besides the Americans present, there were a number of Europeans, whose titles and decorations showed that they were men of high position. Of these, the most distinguished was M. de Lesseps, who, in spite of his advanced age, is still full of life and energy, and has all the ardor and the hopefulness of youth.

After an hour of pleasant conversation, the company adjourned to the large dining-room, which had been decorated with flags, in which those of America and Egypt were everywhere conspicuous. The tables were loaded with flowers. During the whole evening the band of the Khedive, which was stationed under the windows, played American airs. The Consul-General presided, having on his right Mr. William Walter Phelps, our Minister to Vienna, who had arrived that day on his way up the Nile, and next to him Mahmoud Pacha, the Prime Minister of the

Khedive; and on the other side the Finance Minister, and next to him Arabi Bey, now Minister of War, to whom I sat directly opposite, and had opportunity to observe him the whole evening. I was struck with the gravity of his manner, which was serious almost to sadness. While all round the tables the company was merry and gay, he sat silent, as one absorbed in thought. I do not think he smiled the whole evening. Nor did he take a drop of wine. While Europeans and Americans were drinking freely, his glasses remained untouched. In this, as in his prayers and fastings, he is a devout Moslem, and conforms to the strictest rules of his religion. Yet there was nothing sullen in his manner, as if he would cast a silent reproach on the pleasures which he could not enjoy. On the contrary, he preserved the forms of Oriental courtesy, and whenever our eyes met across the table, he touched his breast and forehead, as if by this token he would give me the kiss of peace. Such was the man who was soon to be at the head of Egypt, not only of the army, but of the state—the leader in a war, and the captive of England.

Of course there could be no American dinner without toasts and speeches. General Stone proposed "The Memory of Washington," which was honored as usual by all rising and standing in silence. Next came "The President of the United States," to which there was a response which, reviewing the sad events of the year, paid a deserved tribute to our martyred President, and expressed generous hopes for his successor. To the name of "The Khedive," Mahmoud Pacha replied in Arabic. One of the Chamber of Notables also spoke in the same language, and an officer translated his words into French. A distinguished German editor, Mr. Sonnemann of Frankfort, responded for "The Press," eulogizing the Press of America as surpassing in enterprise and independence the Press of Europe. M. de

Lesseps was called up, and spoke, of course in his own language, with a force and energy that awakened great enthusiasm. He said he had traversed America from New York to San Francisco, and had visited everywhere the schools, to which he attached the greatest importance, especially to the schools for women, which he said were the foundation of the greatness of America. This was strange language to be spoken in the presence of an assembly of Moslems! All the expressions of feeling were in the friendliest spirit. One speaker ended with this rhetorical flourish, in which the compliments were pretty evenly balanced between Egypt and America:

"In the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia there was a Department assigned to Egypt, over which was written 'From the oldest of nations to the youngest.' That greeting we now return, presenting the best wishes of the youngest of nations to the oldest. Americans have many attractions to Egypt. Hundreds of our people come here every Winter, to enjoy your climate, to sail up the Nile, to see your monuments, your temples and pyramids. How can we but wish well to a country where we have had so delightful, though but a temporary, home?

"I see before me distinguished representatives of the Arab race, one of the great races of the world, which has played a mighty part in history—and not only in the history of Asia and Africa, but of Europe also, for scholars cannot forget that there was a time when the Arabs, carrying their conquests along the northern shores of Africa, crossed into Spain, where they remained hundreds of years, and where they founded the Universities of Seville and Cordova, and were the masters of learning for Western Europe. A race which has had such a place in the past, surely has reason to anticipate a great career in the future.

"So do we believe in the continued vitality of Egypt. Superficial travellers may think its only interest is from what it has been in the past, from its pyramids, its temples, and its tombs. But is there nothing of Egypt but its sepulchres? I see around me a living Egypt, in which there

are elements of growth, which promise to restore at least a portion of its former greatness. That all this may be realized, is the ardent wish of America. Across the world of waters that rolls between us—across the Atlantic and the Mediterranean—she sends her greeting to her elder sister of the Orient. As in the ages past, so in the ages to come may the Nile, rising in the Highlands of Central Africa, continue to pour down its annual flood, spreading over the land of Egypt fertility and abundance; and so long may this beautiful country be the home of a prosperous and happy people."

If the speaker could have foreseen the events of the next few months, he might have been less sanguine of the future of the Arab race, but he certainly would not have abated anything of his good wishes for Egypt.

The last speech was by Mr. Phelps, who mingled wisdom and wit in such a way as put everybody in the happiest mood, and the company broke up while the band played Hail Columbia and the Star-spangled Banner.

If fine words could make fair weather, the troubles of Egypt ought to have vanished with the darkness of the night; but although the sun rose the next morning over the Mokattam hills without a cloud, the political sky was as dark and threatening as ever. Weeks passed, and affairs grew "no better" very fast. Change succeeded to change, yet none brought the desired relief. The sympathy of Americans was still with the National party to this extent, that they felt that the country had a substantial grievance in the enormous burden of debt and of taxation which had been rolled upon it, and in the swarm of foreign officials which eat out its substance—a grievance against which it was a matter of loyalty and of patriotism to protest with the utmost energy. Nor was this feeling confined to Americans: so far as I could learn, it was the sentiment of all foreigners in Cairo, except those who were directly or indirectly interested in the maintenance of the Control.

But the best cause may be ruined by folly or by violence. If the National party had been what a party is in other countries—if it had limited itself to a firm, manly protest against abuses—it would have had the sympathy and support of all the friends of good government throughout Europe and in America. But they do not do things in that way in Egypt. There are no political parties such as exist in England and in America, which can give effect to public indignation. The Arabs do not understand our way of expressing discontent, by holding public meetings and passing resolutions. The only organized body is the army, so that a political movement, to carry any force with it, becomes almost of necessity a military movement. It is so much easier to make changes in the Mexican way, by a pronunciamento and a military demonstration, than by the slow process of petitioning and protesting. Why should they take this roundabout way of carrying out their will, when it was only necessary to march on the Palace? As the poor Khedive was wholly unsupported, he had nothing to do but to submit. The Anglo-French Controllers of course protested vigorously, but as they had not a soldier at their back, Arabi Bey, at the head of his regiments, laughed them to scorn.

This military remedy for the evils of the state, though at first it seemed quite Napoleonic, at last became wearisome, and Americans ceased to regard it with enthusiasm. The heroic treatment in disease sometimes cures, but not unfrequently kills; and so it might be with the unhappy state on which these army surgeons were making such terrible experiments. We began to suspect that these new leaders, who raised the cry of "Egypt for the Egyptians," meant only Egypt for themselves. They did not show such unselfish patriotism as lifted them above the mass of their countrymen. They were just as full of intrigue, and just

as eager for power—in short, just as thorough Arabs—as the men whom they had displaced, while they showed a childish incapacity for government, putting up one day what they pulled down the next. This was not a government based on political principles, or even a government of party, but a government of mere caprice. They dictated to the Khedive the Ministers he should appoint, and then deposed the men of their own creation. This was repeated so often that it created in the foreign community a general feeling of insecurity. The Egyptian leaders themselves seemed to have a sense of their successive failures; but this, instead of leading them to adopt a more conciliatory policy, only enraged them to the point of taking still more desperate measures. They could go to any length, for there was no restraint upon their power. But one thing they could not do—they could not inspire confidence. The more changes they made, the more did they stir up uneasiness and alarm; and when at last it came to the point that troops surrounded the Palace, and gave the Khedive only till a certain hour in which to make his submission, with orders to fire upon him in case he refused, the best friends of Egypt said, This is Revolution! They saw that the country was drifting into hopeless anarchy; that the temper of the people was becoming more sullen; that the worst elements of the Arab nature were aroused, and would soon get beyond control. All the dangers which we fondly hoped were past, came back again more threatening than before. The temporary tranquillity which we had enjoyed was but the lull before the storm.

CHAPTER II.

ENGLAND IN EGYPT.

"What business have the English in Egypt?" is a question often asked since the recent events. Without assuming to speak for those who are well able to speak for themselves, there are some plain principles of justice which must occur to all candid minds, and which may furnish at least a partial answer. Englishmen as individuals have just the same rights in Egypt which Americans have—no more and no less. We claim the right of going to Egypt, as we would go to France or Italy, and as long as we go quietly about our business, of having the protection of its laws. Certainly it is not unreasonable to insist that the Egyptian Government shall see to it that American citizens are protected in life and property, that they are not robbed or assassinated. If, in spite of all assurances of protection, they *are* robbed or murdered, the very least their Government can do is to make a demand, respectful but determined, that the robbers or murderers shall be punished. The most violent denouncers of English intervention can hardly deny that in this respect Englishmen have the same rights as Americans. But there was a time not many months ago when neither an Englishman nor an American could show himself anywhere in Egypt without danger of being both robbed and murdered; when the streets of Cairo and of Alexandria were as unsafe as if one were among the cannibals of New Guinea or the head-hunters of Borneo.

Then ensued a veritable panic—a feeling almost as if a reign of terror had begun. Foreign consuls warned their countrymen that they could no longer be responsible for their safety, and advised them to get out of the country. To protect them as far as possible, the French and English fleets were ordered to Alexandria. This, in the opinion of many, was a fatal mistake. But for this, it is said, there would have been no massacre and no bombardment. This inflamed the feeling of the Arab population to the highest point, and precipitated the terrible events which followed. This is possible, and yet, looking at it calmly, I cannot see that England and France did any more than they ought to have done, or that there was any sufficient cause to rouse a populace to such rage and fury.

Let us make the case our own. Suppose for some cause—not our own fault, some action of our Government—Americans were suddenly to become unpopular in Mexico, so much so that American residents in Vera Cruz felt that their lives were not safe, and that for their protection the squadron in the Gulf of Mexico were ordered to that port. Would that have been an offence to the majesty of Mexico sufficient to justify, or to excuse, the Mexicans if they should rise and massacre every American whom they could find in their streets? Or suppose they should begin to throw up earthworks, and train their guns on our ships, should we strike our flag, and steal ignominiously out of the harbor? On the contrary, I think an American Admiral would have done just what the English Admiral did—that he would not have lifted an anchor under the compulsion of threats, but stayed where he was, and taken the consequences. The fleet was lying quietly in the harbor of Alexandria, not a gun had been fired, when there occurred in that city one of the most atrocious massacres

of modern times. Hundreds of Europeans were hunted down in the streets, clubbed to death or bayoneted: for soldiers, whose business it was to keep order, took part in the cowardly butchery.

Of this savage outbreak, a great many explanations have been offered. But we sometimes go very far round to find a reason for an act or an event, when the cause lies on the surface. The real cause was not a political one, not a sense of injury at the action of France or England, but the natural temper of the people. On board our ship from Naples to Alexandria was a gentleman who had been the French Consul at the latter port for more than twenty years; and to my inquiry for his opinion of the people among whom he had lived so long, he answered almost savagely, "Les Arabes sont bêtes féroces!" That tells the whole story. There is in the Arab nature an element of ferocity that may well liken them to wild beasts. It is a feeling compounded of hatred of foreigners and religious fanaticism, which only needs to be let loose from restraint to lead them to any act of violence and blood. It was with such a population that England had to deal.

From the moment of the massacre, the relations of England and Egypt were changed. It was no longer a question of Anglo-French Control. The blood of murdered Englishmen cried from the stones of the streets of Alexandria, and called for punishment. It is said that we must not hold either the government or the people responsible for what was merely the act of a mob. Certainly not, if either government or people at once disclaim all sympathy with the atrocious crime, and make haste to punish the perpetrators. For this measure of atonement England waited patiently, but none came. To be sure, the military party made a show of virtuous indignation. Hundreds were arrested, but not a man was punished. By the course of

double-dealing and excuses for delay, it became evident that the sympathy of the army and the people was with those who perpetrated the massacre, and not with their unhappy victims. It then became necessary for England to take the matter into her own hands.

That Arabi Pacha was in any way responsible for the massacre is not pretended, for he was at the time in Cairo. But that he felt a keen regret for it, or that he took any decided measures to punish its perpetrators, I find no evidence. I fear that he was in this like his race—a true Arab in duplicity. He has shown many points of his character since that evening when I sat opposite to him at Cairo, and he touched his breast and forehead, and gave me the kiss of peace. He has been lifted up to a higher position, as the head not only of the army, but of the state. Perhaps I can judge him better now, can see him in his true proportions, and form a clearer idea of the real greatness or littleness of the man. I would judge him justly, with full recognition of all in him that is worthy of respect. I do not by any means regard him as a light and trifling character, to be dismissed with a sneer. He is a man of courage and capacity. No man could place himself at the head of a great national movement, as he has done, who did not possess both. Nor is he merely puffed up with conceit and vanity, with no serious purpose. There is in him an element of religious fanaticism, which makes him in dead earnest in anything he undertakes. Whatever education he has was obtained at the University of El Azhar in Cairo, which is the very centre and focus of Moslem fanaticism. One who was a fellow-student with him there, tells me that he was very religious and devout. Such a man is not a contemptible enemy. As to his patriotism, I neither dispute it nor doubt it, although I am very incredulous of

patriotism among Moslems and Arabs—at least the word has to be understood in a peculiar way. Patriotism has its types, as it appears among different nations. The Bedaween are intensely patriotic, though their only country is the desert. Every sheik is jealous for his tribe—that is, within its territory he is not willing that anybody should have the privilege of robbing but himself. In Mexico every man who makes a revolution is a patriot—that is, he believes (honestly, no doubt) that the good of the country requires that he should be the head of the state, and he gets up a revolution to carry out that patriotic purpose. Whether the patriotism of the Egyptian leader has any higher character than this, may be doubted. He seems to be compounded in about equal parts of three elements, which are the master-passions of his nature—hatred of foreigners, religious fanaticism, and personal ambition. These different impulses are so mixed up in him, that probably he does not know one from another. He does not stop to analyze his motives (the Arab intellect is not given to such fine distinctions), and so he might well think he was acting from one when he was really acting from another. When he was seeking his own ambition, he believed he was seeking the good of his country, and even doing God service: for it must be that Allah was pleased that honor should come to such a faithful servant. What a happy conjunction of circumstances, whereby he was able at one and the same moment to serve God, his country, and himself! We have no doubt that he wished Egypt to be independent of all foreign control—of the control of Turkey as well as of France and England, however he might profess loyalty to the Sultan, and then he would have liked to be the head of this independent African State. That is all that we can find in Arabi Pacha. Of such a man we cannot make, in any exalted sense, either a patriot

or a prophet, a restorer of Islam or a savior of his country.

The massacre took place on the 11th of June; the bombardment followed on the 11th of July. One whole month England was waiting for some atonement for that horrible outrage, some show of a disposition to punish such barbarity and crime. But instead of that, the military party, which was now in full power, felt not so much shame at this inhuman massacre as annoyance at the continued presence of English ships in the harbor. They had a perfect right to be there, as American ships would have had a right to be there if Americans had been massacred in the streets of Alexandria; and if punishment had been so long delayed that the authorities, instead of punishing, seemed to justify the act, and to make it their own. Instead of seizing and punishing the murderers, they began to plot to drive out the fleet. If they had had torpedoes, they would have blown up the ironclads. As it was, they could only throw up breastworks and plant guns, with the plain intent, as soon as they were strong enough, to open fire. Now it is not in human nature, least of all in the military nature, to see such preparations for attack with a tranquil mind; and Arabi Pacha was politely requested to desist. Not only did the English Admiral request this, but the Khedive and the Sultan commanded it. The wily Arab professed compliance, and declared that all mounting of guns had been stopped; but when an electric light from the fleet was turned on the forts, the men were found as busily at work as ever. After this discovery of falsehood and treachery, the Admiral thought it prudent to take some other security than the word of a Moslem.

And so at last the war was begun. On Tuesday morning, the 11th of July, the English fleet commenced the bombardment of Alexandria, and in a few hours silenced the forts, and that afternoon or the next morning took

possession. When we heard that the first gun had been fired, it was with a feeling of relief. The conflict was inevitable, and as it had to come, the sooner it came the better: for the sooner it began, the sooner it would be over, and thus an end be put to a state of things which was the ruin of Egypt, while it was a source of perplexity and uneasiness to all Europe. War is a terrible thing, but there are things worse than war. Anarchy is worse. Better a conflict on the battlefield or on the sea than such a state of things, that part of a city's population was in daily fear of massacre; that an European dare not walk the streets lest he should be the object of insult or of personal violence; and that the few remaining residents who could not flee were obliged to seek for safety by barricading themselves within their houses, with the dreadful prospect of having to fight with an infuriated rabble, intent on pillage and fierce for blood.

When it came to the point of actual hostilities, it pleased some who could see nothing in the course of England but injustice and oppression, to speak of it as a war against Egypt. Certainly it was a war in Egyptian waters and on Egyptian soil; but it was not a war against the Egyptian government, but, on the contrary, in support of that government against an armed rebellion which threatened to destroy it. To this intervention England was bound by every sentiment of justice and honor: for she had been the adviser, and as it were the protector, of the Khedive. Indeed it was because he was thought to be too much under her influence and control, that he became unpopular with the military party at home. After leading him into a position of such difficulty and such peril, it would have been an infamy to desert him in the very crisis of his fate. That shame was not to be put upon England. On the other hand, how loyally and faith-

fully she fulfilled her obligations to her ally, the world knows. The pretence of a great patriotic movement in Egypt, and a show of military power, were kept up until the troops could arrive from England and from India, when, on the 13th of September, starting a little after midnight, they stole silently across the sands up to the strongly-fortified position of the enemy, and as soon as daylight began to appear, in the gray of the early morning, stormed the intrenchments, and in one hour destroyed the whole Egyptian army. The collapse was complete; the defeat became a rout; men and horses fled in wild dismay on the road to Cairo, which the British troops entered the next day, cheered and welcomed by the very mob that, if it had felt strong enough, would have revelled with fiendish delight in the massacre of every man of the regiments that now marched through their streets. The Khedive was brought back, and received with every demonstration of enthusiastic loyalty; while the conquering army camped in the public squares.

The English being thus established in Egypt, the public feeling of Europe and America is much exercised as to how long they are to stay there. Hardly had they entered Cairo before the Porte addressed a letter to Lord Dufferin, intimating that as the object of their expedition was accomplished, there was no use for them to remain any longer, and asking how soon they would leave the country and return to England? To this modest inquiry, the accomplished diplomatist returned an answer, which it is to be hoped gave satisfaction, to the effect that England had no wish to prolong her occupation, but that she had made great sacrifices to restore order in Egypt, and could not leave the country until she had taken ample security against a recurrence of the same state of anarchy—which, being interpreted, signifies that the troops will remain just

as long as it pleases the English government and people. They may well be excused if they take their own time about it, for if Englishmen, as individuals, have the same rights in Egypt as Americans, yet beyond these general rights, which are common to all foreigners, England as a country has some special claims to consideration. England has fought for Egypt and for Turkey again and again. Indeed it may be said that both owe to her their continued existence. When Napoleon invaded Egypt in 1798, he would have taken the country and kept it if it had not been for England. The Egyptians could do nothing: Napoleon swept away the Mamelukes at the Battle of the Pyramids. It was an English fleet under Lord Nelson which fought the Battle of the Nile. It was an English General, Sir Ralph Abercrombie, who gained the final victory on land which drove the French out of Egypt. Napoleon invaded Syria, and carried everything before him till he encountered the English at Acre, who soon put a stop to his victorious career. Again in 1831 Ibrahim Pacha invaded Syria, and would have marched on Constantinople if he had not been stopped by the European powers. In 1854 England and France went to war with Russia to preserve Turkey. Thus often has England fought for Turkey and for Egypt, and the bones of her soldiers who have fallen in defending those Moslem powers, are scattered on many battlefields in three continents—in Europe, in Asia, and in Africa. It is not yet five years since England put forth her powerful hand to save Turkey, which was at the feet of Russia. A Russian army was at the gates of Constantinople, and could have entered the city, and planted its guns on the heights overlooking the Bosphorus, and the Russian flag might have waved from all the minarets of the Turkish capital. When in that city a few months since, a friend pointed out the position of the

Russian army, which was camped almost under the walls, and we asked, Why did it not march in and take full possession? The answer was, It was stopped by the English fleet, which came up the Dardanelles and through the Sea of Marmora, and anchored in sight of Constantinople. The Sultan, who has lately protested so energetically against an English fleet in the harbor of Alexandria as an invasion of his sovereign rights, was not at all disturbed at the sight then, but on the contrary felt an immeasurable relief, as if he had been reprieved from a sentence of death, when he saw the flags of the great English ironclads from the windows of his Palace. After thus saving both Turkey and Egypt again and again, it is not a great presumption for England to ask whether she has not some rights in the East which Turk and Arab are bound to respect.

Besides all this, England has great material interests in Egypt. We say nothing of the interest of bondholders, of money loaned for internal improvements—for railroads and canals, and piers and ports. This very harbor of Alexandria, which has been the scene of such great events, was built largely by English money. But leaving all this, the interest of England in the Suez Canal is greater than that of all the world beside. Eighty or ninety per cent. of the ships that pass through that Canal, are English. It is the highway from England to India. The distance from London or Liverpool to Bombay, is nearly five thousand miles less by the Suez Canal than by the old route around Africa. The control of this, therefore, is not only a commercial convenience; it is a military necessity. Suppose there were another mutiny in India, and that Arabi Pacha had command of the Suez Canal, and should think it a good time to "get even" with England by stopping all transit, and that the English troops should have to be sent around by way of the Cape of Good Hope, the

two or three weeks' delay might cause the loss of the English Empire in India. Can England leave a matter of such moment to the caprice of a military adventurer?

In the presence of such interests, it is not difficult to understand what England has been fighting for. Aside from her obligations to the Khedive, she had immense interests in Egypt, and Egypt was in a state of anarchy, which threatened to destroy those interests. England was fighting to put down that anarchy, and to restore order and good government. In this she was fighting for the real interest of Egypt as well as her own. If the recent state of things continued, the country was ruined. The only hope was in prompt and decisive action, which should crush rebellion and reëstablish order. At the same time, England was fighting for the Suez Canal, as she would for Malta and Gibraltar, as outworks of Britain, whose preservation concerned the integrity of her mighty realm.

For these reasons, which might be enlarged to any extent, it is clear that England had a right to send her troops to Egypt to settle this business between a faithful ally, the present Khedive (whom the military party would sacrifice simply because he had been such a friend of England), and his rebellious soldiers. She had a right to go there, if she had a right to go anywhere, to fight for the security of her Indian Empire. In the battle which she undertook, she was fighting for our interests as well as her own: to make it safe for Americans to visit Egypt, to go up the Nile, and to pursue their lawful callings—their travels, or their business affairs, or their missionary enterprises—in the East.

And so the English are masters of Cairo! One more victory for civilization! To some this may seem a very un-American sentiment. Do we not claim America for the Americans, and should we not concede also, as a mat-

ter of simple justice, Egypt for the Egyptians? But the course of events has so drifted within a few months, and so many new elements have come in to change the issue, that "Egypt for the Egyptians" would now mean Egypt to be given up to anarchy and ruin. It is not easy to apportion praise or blame between nations any more than between individuals. There may be wrong on both sides. I am far from thinking England blameless in her dealings with Egypt. In the matter of the Anglo-French Control, there is much which an Englishman would wish to forget. But that does not change the fact that when it came to the point of war, the issue was sharply defined between anarchy and order, between civilization and barbarism; and no friend of humanity could hesitate where to bestow his sympathies. It was precisely the same question in Egypt which so often recurs to the traveller in India. If we go back to the origin of English power in India, the world can hardly furnish a case of greater spoliation and robbery. All the denunciations of it by Burke were fully deserved. And yet in the course of a hundred years, things have so come round that to-day the maintenance of English power is the security of order and peace in India, and the hope of civilization in Southern Asia. And when I visited the Residency in Lucknow, and walked over the holy ground where so many of the best and bravest of England fought and fell, it was with no divided sympathies between its defenders and the murderous Sepoys that gathered round them for their destruction. No matter what were the wrongs suffered by another generation of Hindoos from another generation of Englishmen—that could not change the issue, that the battle then being fought around those walls was a battle between European civilization and Asiatic barbarism. And the same thrill of joy and pride that shot through every

vein at the story of the coming of Havelock to the relief of the beleaguered garrison of Lucknow, now returned when I read of the Highlanders marching up the heights and taking possession of the Citadel of Cairo.

The war is over, but what shall come after it? That is the question which now troubles Europe and the East. As England has had to fight the battle alone, she is entitled to consider, first of all, her own security and protection. She can no longer leave the control of the Suez Canal, and with it her communications with India, to the mercy of any military usurper, who by getting control of the army, may be master of Egypt—only for a few weeks, it may be, yet long enough to work irremediable injury to the commerce of the world. How is this security to be obtained? Years ago Bismarck advised England to take Egypt and keep it. Mr. Gladstone disavows any such purpose, and no doubt with the utmost sincerity. But what may not be a matter of design, may be a matter of necessity. If it were so, it would be the best possible thing for that country. But the same end may be accomplished by England assuming a protectorate over Egypt, while leaving the Khedive as its nominal ruler.

As for Turkey, she has done nothing, and should get nothing. Indeed her part has been worse than nothing. Her whole course from the beginning has been one of falsehood and treachery. The Sultan encouraged the revolt of Arabi Pacha, and sent him a decoration at the very time that he was in arms against the Khedive, only to denounce him as a rebel as soon as (and not a moment before) it became evident that his cause was lost! The proper return for this duplicity would be that the Sultan should lose his hold in Africa. If, as the outcome of this war, the connection of Egypt with Turkey could be severed forever, the end would be worth all that it has cost.

France too can expect to reap little benefit from a war fought wholly by England. No great power ever acted a more contemptible part. After sending her fleet to Alexandria, then to withdraw it at the very moment when the affair threatened to become serious, and to sail away without firing a gun, was an exhibition of weakness such as hardly ever was given by a nation jealous of its military reputation and glory. After this, it is pitiful to read how, as soon as the English entered Cairo, the French officials came flocking back, like vultures to their prey; and that the French Controller reappeared on the scene, asking, in a surprised and injured tone, and with an assurance that was peculiarly French, why he was not invited to attend the meeting of the Ministers of the Khedive, as one of his recognized advisers! This bustling official soon received his quietus in a notice issued by the government, addressed not to him alone, but to all the powers, that the Foreign Control was abolished! France found that she could not leave it to England to fight the battle, and she come in to reap the fruits of victory. This is not the least of the good results of the war, that the Control, which has been such an offence to Egypt, and such a scandal to the world, is to cease to exist; and that England and France will no longer appear in the character of bailiffs engaged in the collection of private debts.

But it is not only the fate of Egypt that is at stake, but in some degree of all the East. It is a strange comment on our ideas of the natural progress of society or of civilization, that the border-land between Asia and Africa, which had on either side of it the greatest empires of antiquity, is to this day overrun by half-savage tribes—true sons of Ishmael, whose hand is against every man, and every man's hand against them. If indeed civilization is ever to invade those waste places of the earth—if law and order are to

subdue the children of the desert, and make their roving-ground as safe from robbers as the sea is from pirates—it must be by the pressure of something stronger than Egyptian or Turkish power. This is a matter which concerns, not England alone, but all commercial nations as well, which have communication with the far East, and which, coming and going, have to traverse these desolate plains, that have been given up hitherto, in more senses than one, to the spirit of destruction.

And perhaps it would not be impertinent to inquire just at this time, whether Christendom has any rights in the East which Moslems are bound to respect? It is not a pleasant thing for the English or American traveller to find the land which was the cradle of his religion under the dominion of the Turk; to have the burial-place of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob covered by a mosque, which no Christian may enter; to see the Mosque of Omar standing on the ancient site of the Temple of Solomon; and to find even the spots connected with the life and death of our Saviour—the place of His birth in the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem, and of His burial in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem—guarded by those who despise the very name of Christ.

Now we do not propose to preach a crusade for the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre; but we may be permitted to rejoice when, in the course of events, an end can be put to the humiliations of centuries. This can only be by a manifestation of superiority so great as to compel Arab and Turk to treat Christian powers and Christian peoples with common decency and respect. For we may as well understand first as last, that however much may be said of Oriental hospitality, yet to all true Mussulmans, in their hearts the foreigner, the Giaour, is an object of hatred, whom it would be doing God service to destroy. The

American missionaries who were in Constantinople during the Russian war, told me that they could tell how the battle was going by the looks of the people ; that every change was reflected in their faces ; that when there was a report of Turkish victories, the populace at once became insolent toward foreigners, whom their fierce countenances seemed to say that they would be glad to massacre ; but when the news came of the fall of Plevna, and the rapid march of the Russians on Constantinople, they collapsed into abject terror. A people of such a mood and temper are always safest when they are kept under the restraint of overwhelming power.

Seeing that such issues are depending on the action now to be taken, may we not say that there are interests involved higher than those either of England or of Egypt—the interests of Christendom and of civilization in the East? England has an opportunity to strike a blow at barbarism such as is not given to a nation in a hundred years. Our only fear is that she may weakly consent to give up her advantages, and thus lose by diplomacy what she has gained in war. If so, the latter end of this movement will be as impotent as its progress hitherto has been glorious. If she fails to complete what she has begun—if, after subduing the military revolt and restoring order, she abandons the country—it will quickly relapse into its former anarchy. Then indeed will ten devils enter in where one was driven out, and the last state of that country will be worse than the first. Let her not by any weak compliances throw away an opportunity such as may never be hers again. "Who knoweth but she has come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" The future of Egypt, and to a large extent of the whole East, is now in the hands of England, and may God give her wisdom and firmness to do her duty!

CHAPTER III.

THE FIRST DAY ON THE DESERT.

I did not come to Egypt to study politics or war, although the extraordinary interest of recent events has led me to refer to both, even to the extent of anticipating what took place after we left Cairo. History has been making so rapidly within the last few months, that even the passing traveller could not go over the scene where so much has transpired, without at least a brief outline of events which may change the face of the Eastern world.

But my purpose in coming to Egypt was simply to take it *en route* to the desert. When we were in the East six years ago, we had planned to sail from Constantinople to Beirut, and make the tour of the Holy Land; but the cholera had broken out in Northern Syria, which caused such a strict quarantine to be kept along the coast, that we were warned that we should be subject to great delay when we came to leave the country to enter Egypt, and so we were obliged to sail direct to Alexandria. We spent six weeks in Egypt, going up the Nile, and then embarked for India. I consoled myself for the loss of Palestine by inwardly resolving to keep it for another time, when I might be able also to go to Mount Sinai. That time had now come, and I was in Cairo not even to enjoy, except for a few days, its picturesque scenes or its delightful climate, but simply to pass on my way to a very different country.

I had come from Naples alone, leaving my family to spend the Winter in Italy. But it would have been cheer-

less to set out on a solitary pilgrimage across the desert. While unsettled in plans, I learned that Dr. George E. Post, Professor of Surgery and Botany in the Syrian Protestant College at Beirut, had for some time desired to make the journey to Sinai, and I wrote to him inviting him to share my tent and table. To my great joy, he was able to accept the invitation, and never was a traveller more fortunate in his companion. I found him the model of a Christian gentleman and scholar. He is one of that corps of young men who, uniting scientific knowledge with missionary zeal, have done so much both for science and religion, and I may add, for the honor of the American name in the East. For weeks we rode side by side on our camels, and his conversation beguiled the weariness of the way. With such a companion, one could never be lonely. He had lived eighteen years in Beirut, was master of the Arabic language, and was familiar with all Oriental customs. He joined me in Cairo on the 20th of February, and we were together a week before we set out on our journey.

He at once relieved me of all the details of our proposed expedition. It is no small thing to make preparation for crossing the desert. One must choose his dragoman, and draw up a formal contract, which has to be signed and sealed before the Consul, in which every item is specified—the number of camels and tents, the days of marching, and the provisions of every kind, even to what we should have for breakfast, for luncheon and dinner, and to the number of our sheets and towels. Travellers in the East may be pardoned if they are sometimes lifted up with vanity when they see that it takes almost as much to set them in motion as to get a ship under weigh. Though there were but two of us, it required a considerable outfit for a month in camp. Everything had to be carried on the backs of camels—our tents, iron bedsteads, mattresses, table, and camp-

chairs—a stock of household furniture sufficient to begin housekeeping; to which must be added stores of canned meat and fruits, boxes of eggs, and even a hencoop full of chickens! Even when thus provided, we could not have a single meal except as we carried sacks of charcoal to cook our food. And not less important than what we were to eat, was what we were to drink, of which we must have a large supply: for though the camels could go four days without water, we could not. This had to be carried in casks, which were slung on the backs of camels. Altogether an Arab sheik, with his patriarchal family, could hardly make a more imposing caravan.

We found a dragoman in a Syrian from Beirut, whom Dr. Post had known before—Yohanna (or Hanna) Abeusaab—who was willing and obliging, though not always as energetic as we could wish, yet who served us fairly well, and for whom we had, and still have, a very friendly feeling. As soon as the contract was signed, he began to bustle about with a sense of importance, and in an hour or two knocked at our doors to ask us to come out into an open space behind the Hotel to see our tents, and to select our camels. The tents were already pitched, and we drew aside the door almost with the feeling that we were penetrating the retreat of some Oriental potentate. They were ornamented with figures in gay colors, and carpeted with Persian rugs, which together made quite a brave show. Yohanna smiled serenely as he saw the pleasure, not unmingled with surprise, with which we regarded such magnificence, and gravely intimated that he was not yet at the end of his resources, but that he would do "more better" for us before he got through. There was also a housekeeping tent in which the cook would perform his mysterious operations. The Arabs would sleep outside in the open air.

The selection of camels is a very nice matter, as on a good beast depends much of the comfort of one's journey. Looking over the number of those lying on the ground, I picked out a young dromedary that had rather a sleek appearance. Just then Dr. Schweinfurth, who was passing in the street, came up, and gave us the benefit of his experience as an African traveller. He thought I had chosen rather a pretty creature, but advised me to spread out what she carried broadly on her back, so as to make, not a narrow saddle, but a space on which one could sit in Turkish fashion, with his legs under him, or change his posture at will. I observed that this was the custom of the Arabs, by which they are able to take their long marches on the desert without undue fatigue. As my camel and I were now to be on somewhat intimate relations, I approached to make her acquaintance, and even tendered her some little caressing, attempting to stroke her gently; but in an instant she swung round her long neck, and gave me a vicious snap, which warned me not to presume on any familiarities. I concluded to make no further advances, but still virtuously resolved to be a kind and indulgent master.

In all this busy preparation, I felt as if I were "only a passenger," although Dr. Post said that the Arabs, recognizing me as the head of the expedition, would give me the title of "Father of Backsheesh." I find that the relation between the giver of backsheesh and the receiver of it, is a mysterious and sacred one. Hardly had I left this tent-ground before an Arab, whose camel I was to ride, rushed up to me in the street, and saluted me with the greatest warmth, telling me that "he was my backsheesh-man"!

The camels went forward to Suez four days before we left Cairo. As we could overtake them in a few hours by railway, we lingered behind to the last moment to enjoy

the animated life of the streets and bazaars. As we sat on our balcony, and listened once more to the music from the square below, it seemed as if the band were playing a *Chant du Depart*, and we knew that our time had come. But we both felt regret at leaving the most Oriental of cities, with perhaps the single exception of Damascus; and as we rolled away, we kept looking back at the Pyramids, as with other companions I had looked back at the dome of St. Peter's as we departed from Rome. The Delta is not unlike the Campagna in its broad sweep and limitless horizon, and never did it appear in greater beauty. The Springtime had long since come, and already the land was rejoicing with the joy of its first harvest—a harvest not of grain, but of grass. As far as the eye could reach, the fields were in bloom with clover. These rich, juicy grasses are the chief dependence of the Arabs for the support of their beasts of burden, and the harvest is gathered with the greatest care. It is not done by patent mowers, as on our Western prairies; but the Arabs, scattering over the plain with their sickles, clear each a rod or two of ground, just enough to make a load for a camel, and piling them in huge bundles on their backs, a procession of these moving haystacks goes swinging along the road into Cairo. This clover-harvest lasts only a few weeks, but it is a very pretty sight, presenting a boundless sea of verdure, and illustrating the exhaustless fertility of the Valley of the Nile.

And now we leave the great river behind us, and move out on the broad spaces of the Delta, where we find resemblances to other landscapes than the Campagna. If we could but take away the miserable Arab villages, and in their places introduce a few windmills and dykes and canals, we might be in Holland; or if we were to go still farther, and strip the landscape of all but what nature has

given it, we might be on the prairies of Illinois. But the Arabs and the camels and the palm-trees are not Dutch nor American.

About fifty miles from Cairo, we come to Zagazig—a place which has risen to importance as a centre of the railway system of Egypt, the line from Cairo meeting that from Alexandria, and going on to Ismailia and Suez. Soon after leaving Zagazig, the railway runs parallel to the Sweet Water Canal, and after a few miles passes over a spot which six months later was to be made famous by the battle of Tel-el-Kebir.

But as we could not anticipate history that was to come, our thoughts were of history long past and remote. We were here skirting the land of Goshen, where Jacob and his sons settled when they came into Egypt, and from which four hundred years later Moses led the Exodus of the Israelites, then grown to be a nation of two (perhaps three) millions of people. When they rose up in the night to flee out of Egypt, it is not probable that they intended to march by the way of the desert: for that was far aside from the direct route to Canaan, the land promised to their fathers. At first they moved to the northeast, following the old caravan route to Syria, from which they were turned back by a line of forts which stretched along the border of Egypt—the dividing-line between Asia and Africa. It was then that they turned southward to make their escape, and that the Egyptians, following hard after them, thought that they had caught them between the mountains and the sea, which had "shut them in"; and it was only when the Israelites had crossed the Red Sea, which not only overwhelmed their enemies, but put a barrier to further pursuit, that they were safe.

At Ismailia we struck the desert, which here appears, not as a level plain, but undulating like the rolling prairies

of the West. The wind, having an unbroken sweep, makes sport of the sand, as it does of snow in Winter, casting it up in huge drifts, like the dunes thrown up by the German Ocean on the coast of Holland.

At eight o'clock in the evening we reached Suez (we had left Cairo at noon), and stopped at the hotel where, with another travelling companion, I had rested for a night six years before, when on the way to India. There is hardly a caravanserai in the world which receives within its doors a more miscellaneous company of travellers, coming and going between Europe and Asia. As we sat at table, Englishmen who had just landed were talking of tiger-hunts in India. A gentleman with whom we had made a pleasant acquaintance in Cairo, was to leave the next morning for Hong Kong. While conversing with him, our dragoman burst in to tells us that the camels had come, and with the Arabs were in camp on the other side of the Gulf of Suez, distant three hours' sail. He wished us to be up at six, and in light marching order for our long journey on the Desert. We begged for an hour's grace, but promptly at seven stepped into the little boat that was lying at the quay; and as our English friends, who were on the balcony of the hotel, waved their handkerchiefs and wished us a happy journey, the Arab boatmen raised their lateen-sail, and we glided softly from the African shore.

But there was still a little formality before we were fairly out of Egypt. For months there had been almost a panic in the East, from dread of the approach of cholera. It had broken out in Mecca, where it was reported that hundreds were dying daily, and from which returning pilgrims had so often brought the cholera or the plague into Western Asia, and so into Europe. A strict police had been kept up on all the lines of approach, and thousands

of pilgrims were compelled to halt in their march till the danger of contagion was passed. This *cordon sanitaire* was still rigidly maintained even when there seemed to be no necessity for it. The alarm was over, and yet more than a dozen great steamships were still lying off the harbor, detained in quarantine a week before they could land their passengers, lest they should bring cholera from India or some other part of Asia. As this was no longer necessary, it seemed a cruel hardship that Europeans, returning from the East, when their voyage was over and they were in sight of land, should be detained a whole week before they could set foot on shore. Even we, poor innocents, although we did not come from Mecca, but were rather going towards it, yet had to stop at the quarantine to be inspected, lest we should carry infection among the beggarly Arabs. However, they did not detain us long, and taking on board a black soldier, who had some badge of office round his neck, and whose presence gave us permission to land on the other side, we bore away. Never did a fairer morning shine on land or sea. As we receded from Suez, we had a fuller view of the mountains of Attaka, which form a background behind it; and very grand they were, with their sharp peaks rising against the sky, and their sides seamed and scarred with the storms of thousands of years. As they are of a dark-brown-red color, one can hardly resist the impression that they gave name to the Red Sea, although it is more commonly supposed to be derived from the red coral which is so abundant in its waters. This bold and rugged coast of Africa is in striking contrast with that of Asia, which is all sand and desert. As we sailed across from one to the other, it seemed as if here was the natural place for the passage of the Israelites; as if they must have been "shut in" by the mountains behind us, and crossed here at the narrowest part of the

sea. In such musings we skimmed the still waters of the Gulf. As we approached the other side, we found the shore covered with tents, which were for the coast-guard that had been kept here for months to detain caravans of pilgrims coming from Mecca. At ten o'clock the boat touched a long stone pier that stretched out from the land, and we sprang ashore, and were on the soil of Asia. Here our camels were waiting for us. But we did not wait for them, but leaving them to load up the baggage, started off in advance, eager for our first walk on the desert. The fresh, pure air put new life into us, and we strode ahead in high spirits, although here and there the skeletons of camels that lay bleaching in the sun warned us that a desert journey was not without its dangers.

At the distance of a mile or two we came to the Wells of Moses, where there are a number of springs and palm-trees. The place may well bear the name of Moses: for as it is the first oasis on the desert, there can be little doubt that he camped here after his passage of the Red Sea, and here perhaps Miriam sang her song of triumph.

These Fountains of Moses might be made a very pretty spot. But like everything which the Arabs touch, the place is neglected and dirty. Green slime collects on the pools of water, yet underneath the springs bubble up as fresh as they did three thousand years ago, and with a little effort the surface might be kept clear, and the water be always sweet and pure. Even as it is, the palm-trees grow luxuriantly, the very sight of which, and of the pools of water, must be grateful to those coming from the desert. We were in a glow with our walk, and found it very pleasant to rest under the shade, and enjoy the coolness, as a gentle wind was stirring the palms above our heads. Generally parties camp here for the first night, and start fresh in the morning. But we had a day's work before us, and

now sprang up as we saw our train approaching. It halted in front of us, and the camels knelt down in the soft, warm sand for us to mount, and when they rose up, we were fairly launched on the desert.

To the left is a chain of low hills, which forms part of the escarpment, bounding like a wall the vast upland of the Great and Terrible Wilderness, which we were afterwards to traverse, and which we found to be indeed a land of desolation. Between these hills and the Red Sea stretches the desert, into which the traveller plunges as soon as he leaves the Wells of Moses. There is no gradual approach, by which he may get accustomed to his new experience. As the sailor puts out from the land into the open sea, so the traveller is instantly at sea in the billowy ocean of sand. And how did it seem—this first dash into the desert? The first sensations were of glare and heat. The heat was melting, the glare was blinding. The sun beat down upon us as in mid-summer. Turn which way I would, the sky above was brass, and the earth beneath a fiery furnace. Even the sight of the sea gave no suggestion of coolness, but rather the contrary, as it shimmered under the blazing sun, which seemed as if it would lick up all the waters of the earth. As we sweltered on over the sands, I thought, How little do those who "live at home at ease" know of the "delights" of foreign travel! After an hour or two, it began to grow rather monotonous; and fearing lest I should dissolve, if this heat continued all the afternoon, I turned meekly to the dragoman, and asked "Yohanna, how long are we to have this sort of thing?" "Thirty days," was the answer. I dropped the subject.

As some travellers who follow us may be as ignorant or as thoughtless as I was, perhaps it may be of service to tell how I learned by experience to guard myself against these two exposures and dangers of the desert. To pro-

tect my eyes, I had provided myself in Cairo with goggles, which I immediately mounted, and which for a time afforded great relief: a sudden shadow fell on the landscape, as if a welcome cloud had intercepted the rays of the sun; all things took another hue; the yellow sand put on a purple tint that was grateful. But after an hour or two, I found that the blue glasses, while they shut out the glare, also shut out the view of the desert; and as I wished to see it in all its savage nakedness, I uncovered my eyes. As a partial protection, I had purchased in Cairo a pith hat, or helmet, such as is commonly worn in India, which is perforated to furnish ventilation for the head, and which projects in front so as to afford a partial screen for the eyes. At Mount Sinai I bought of a monk a straw hat of immense brim, such as I had never seen worn except by Chinamen in the East. It seemed to be modelled after the top story of a pagoda, and settled on my head like an extinguisher. It was very good on the desert except as the wind blew, when it took the breeze like a sail or a parachute. After many experiments, I came to the conclusion that the best protection against both the blinding glare and the withering heat, was the Indian helmet, supplemented by a broad, generous umbrella. The latter should be specially constructed for the purpose—double-lined, and with a long, stout handle that can be lashed to the pommel of the saddle. With these two protections combined, one may feel that he has a double awning on the upper deck, and will hardly be in danger of ophthalmia or sunstroke. And yet let the traveller do what he will, there are certain stubborn realities that are here, and that cannot be changed: the fierce sun is over his head, and the burning sand is under his feet; and after all precautions, he will find it necessary to offer the prayer that the sun may not strike him by day, nor the moon by night.

Added to the stifling heat, we began to feel the craving of hunger, for we had taken our breakfast at Suez at an early hour. It was now time for lunch, and I looked about for some quiet, shady spot, where we could find shelter from the noontide heat. How welcome would be one of our Stockbridge elms, and how gladly would we lie down under its grateful shade! But in all the horizon there was not a tree to be seen—not a solitary palm, nor even a juniper bush, under which we might crouch, like Elijah. Weary with the hopeless search, at last we halted right in the midst of the desert, "squatting" on the sands, with no other shade but that of an umbrella. But we made the best of it. The dragoman spread out his Persian rugs, and proudly displayed the resources of civilization, as he brought out tin plates and knives and forks, and gave us a roasted chicken and pressed beef, with bread and oranges and figs. We rose up grateful as for a feast, mounted our camels, and resumed our march. From that moment we took a new view of life, looking on the bright side of the desert. We found that while the heat was intense, the air was of such exquisite purity that we drew in deep inhalations. We breathed though we burned, and each breath seemed to renew our strength. In such an atmosphere one can see to a great distance. We had in full view the chain of mountains on the other side of the Red Sea. We even grew reconciled to the everlasting sand, which, though burning to the touch under the midday sun, was yet so clean that it seemed as if it had never been stained by blood or tears. So pure and undefiled was it that we wondered not that in the absence of water it is sometimes used for the sacrament of baptism, and that the Arabs use it for their washings before prayer. Our dragoman put it to a more homely service: he washed his dishes in the sand, whereby they were not only cleansed, but scoured.

And now as we are fully "at sea," it is time to speak of the "ship" that carries us. To-day began my first experience of camel-riding, of which I had heard such fearful descriptions, and which is to many the great terror of the desert. An English writer, the late Albert Smith, describes the sensation to be like that which one would experience in riding on a piano-stool that was mounted on the top of a Hansom cab, and driven over plowed ground! Friends had told me that my back would be broken, and for the first hour or two I almost expected to hear the bones crack. Yet strange to say, I lived through it, and "still live" after a month's experience of the same kind, and find camel-riding not at all unpleasant. It is a long, swinging motion, and one needs to get limbered up to it. The spine must be made flexible—not a bad thing for a man who is by nature stiff-backed. Indeed I am prepared to take up the defence of the camel as a much-abused and long-suffering beast. True, I cannot boast of his looks or of his temper. He has no beauty, like the horse, with smooth, round body, arched neck, and clean limbs. The only pretty feature of a camel is his ears, which, instead of being long like a donkey's, are small like those of a mouse. But his general features are ungainly: he seems to be all back and legs. These are not graceful proportions. Nor is the absence of physical perfection compensated by his moral qualities, so that we can say "handsome is that handsome does," for the camel is not an amiable beast. He is always groaning and complaining, and has a growl like a lion.

But in spite of all defects of temper, he has some notable virtues. Though he has not the speed of the horse, yet when it comes to the heavy work of carrying burdens, he leaves the horse far behind. Much as camels growl when you are loading them, yet when the burden is

placed upon them, though they will not skip off like a prancing steed, they will rise up and carry it all day long. In this they are like some Christians, who are always grumbling, but who, when it comes to the pinch, rise up under their loads, and bear them manfully; while others, who are smooth and plausible and full of promises, manage to evade every irksome duty. But as to riding this beast of burden, one might well hesitate. The first glance is not assuring. When you take your stand beside the huge creature, whose hump towers quite above your head, and think of climbing such a height, it seems like climbing a haystack. But you do not have to climb up to him: he kneels down to you. The only trouble is in mounting. Here there are three separate motions, which may be described as a kind of "double back-action," or a double forward-action. The camel is lying on the ground, his long legs all under him, and they have to be taken out by instalments. The rider mounts, and the beast begins to rise. First he rises to his foreknees. This tips the rider back to an angle of forty-five degrees. Then his long hindlegs begin to move under him, and as he rises, not to the knees, but to the full height, the rider has a violent pitch forward. Then the forelegs are set in motion again, by which the camel rises from his knees to his proper level, and the rider is in the saddle.*

* Dr. Post, who looks at the camel with the eye of an anatomist, describes his rising up on his feet more scientifically, as follows: "It is divided into three stages: 1st, A backward undulation, by which the hindquarters receive the weight of the trunk, while he disengages his left foreleg, and advances it bent at the left foreknee. 2d, A strong forward lunge as he raises both hindquarters together to their full height; it is this lunge which surprises the inexperienced rider by the punch in the back and the forward fling. 3d, The left foreleg is now straightened fully, thus raising the forequarters to their natural level;

Once seated, the posture is very easy. Indeed one can ride in any posture—astride, as men ride, or sidewise, as ladies ride—and with this advantage, that one can turn either way, to the right or the left. When Dr. Post and I were riding side by side, we often turned so as to face each other, and thus had many a pleasant conversation as we moved slowly along. Sometimes the Doctor, who was an expert in such gymnastics, swung clear round toward the tail, and so watched the caravan as it came lumbering along behind us. The favorite posture of the Arab is with his legs crossed on the camel's neck. To this one easily gets accustomed. I sat thus for hours, with folded arms and folded legs—the picture of a philosopher. It is a great advantage in riding that the camel does not need to be guided. He has no bridle, but only a halter around his nose, by which he is led. To each animal there is a cameleer, who, if need be, will go before and lead him. But I soon found this to be unnecessary, since camels, left to themselves, will follow each other in Indian file, and seldom get out of the way. Thus moving on with slow and steady step, a camel's back is a good place for reading or meditation. As one has no use for his hands in guiding, he can hold a book or a letter. As I could get no new letters on the desert, I read over my old ones again and again. Here too one can find scope for endless reveries. In a caravan one is often left to himself. His companions may push ahead, or drop in the rear, so that the line of march is

he assists himself in this motion by steadying himself on his right wrist until he is nearly erect, when he flings the right forefoot into position in the act of straightening the other leg. The act of kneeling reverses these motions, except that he drops upon both foreknees at once, giving something of a jar to the rider."

long drawn out, and each one finds himself alone. At such times I used to cross my legs, and throwing the halter over the neck of my poor dromedary, let her stray along at her own will, now stopping to crop the scanty herbage, and now moving on with measured step. Thus "rocked," as it were, "in the cradle of the deep," who could but give way to his quiet musings? Especially did this mood come upon us at the approach of evening. Isaac went forth to meditate at eventide, and few are not more or less touched with the sweet influences of the scene and the hour. Conversation drooped with the falling of the day, and for an hour or two we rode on in silence. As the sun sank lower on the Egyptian hills, the air grew cooler, and then came the beauty of the desert. The sun went down in glory. Turning on our camels, we watched the dying day as it lingered long on the waters of the Red Sea and on the tops of the distant mountains. Then shot up something like an aurora, or the afterglow on the Nile. The scene was so beautiful that we should have stopped to gaze upon it but that we were growing anxious about our course. The baggage train had gone ahead to pitch the camp, but where was it? We looked eagerly for the white tents, but saw none. The last gleam of twilight faded into night, and the moon, nearly full, rose over the desert, and all things looked weird by its light. But the distance seemed longer and longer. By-and-by it flashed upon us that the old sheikh who was leading us had lost his way. There was not a track of any kind. For half an hour we were in a good deal of anxiety, for we might have to spend the night under the open sky. The Arabs raced the camels across the fields, and we shouted at the top of our voices. At length, to our great relief, we heard an answer, and in a few minutes saw the lights of our tents. It was half-past seven

when we came into camp. Our men had been as anxious about us as we were about them. We found dinner awaiting us, after which we strolled out to call upon our neighbors: for another American party, from Philadelphia, which had left the Wells of Moses in the morning, was camped near us. Indeed we camped side by side every night but one till we reached Mount Sinai. Taking the two parties together, there were twenty-seven camels, and about the same, or a larger, number of men. It was a picturesque sight to see the huge creatures stretched upon the ground, and the Arabs about their camp-fires cooking their food. All round us the sand glistened in the moonlight, white as the driven snow. In such a scene of peace, we lay down in our tents to sleep the first night on the desert.

CHAPTER IV.

MARAH, ELIM, AND THE CAMP BY THE RED SEA.

It needs no blast of a trumpet to waken the traveller on the desert. Even the heaviest sleeper must open his eyes when the sun, rising over the level waste, as over the sea, strikes on the white tents. But we had another morning summons to tell us when it was day. In the provisioning of our camp, our dragoman had laid in a large supply of poultry. A spacious hencoop, which crowned like a tower the hump of one of our camels, carried a flock of chickens and pigeons, which were let out at night to pick up the meal that was thrown to them on the sand, and made a pretty home picture as they cackled about, after which, with true domestic instinct, they went to roost on the top of the coop, giving to our camp a little of the appearance of a farmyard. With these more quiet fowls were a couple of roosters that did all the crowing for us that was necessary, and never forgot to waken us early in the morning. We were sure of having "the cock's shrill clarion," if we had not "the echoing horn," to "rouse us from our lowly beds." Nor was it a bad thing to be roused, as the morning is the time to march. A wise traveller will always start early, even if he has to take several hours of rest at noon. On the desert, if nowhere else, "the morning and the evening" *are* "the day."

Soon after sunrise all hands were astir. The breaking up of camp is always an animated scene, and few sights are prettier than the striking of the tents. But when it

comes to loading up the camels, the scene is not only animated, but sometimes too much so. The Arabs are an excitable race, and the cameleer who finds that his beast is overloaded in the distribution of the burdens of the march, is apt to give utterance to his wrath in loud words and fierce gesticulations. This morning I was startled at hearing the voices of the men; they fairly shrieked with anger—I have no doubt they swore by the Prophet, but as I did not understand Arabic, I was happily spared their imprecations—and I thought they were coming to blows, and that we should have a battle of the Bedaween. But if this were like a thunderclap, it was not followed by much of a shower. After a few minutes of this war of words, they relapsed into silence, and went quietly to work loading up their camels, and marched off as if nothing had happened. This first experience was of use to me afterwards, and when I heard the loud voices of the men, I paid no more attention to them than to the growling of the camels.

In the order of march, my companion and I always started in advance, and started on foot. For this there was a double reason. The hour of sunrise was so inspiring that we were eager to be abroad. It seemed as if the sun was not merely new risen on the world, but risen on a new world. Old things had passed away with the shadows of the night, and all things had become new. The exquisite purity of the atmosphere made it a luxury to breathe, and we could not wait a moment in camp when we were ready for a walk on the desert. Besides this, Dr. Post had a special motive to quicken his steps. He is an enthusiastic botanist, and has already collected twelve thousand species of plants, which he has in the Museum of the College at Beirut, and one object he had in accompanying me to Mount Sinai was to make a collection of the Flora of the

Desert. It seemed a strange place in which to look for flowers. But he proved by observation that what is so beautiful in poetry is true in fact; that

> "Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
> And waste its sweetness on the desert air."

In one month on the desert he collected over three hundred and fifty species of plants, most of which were unknown in Syria.

We had not gone far when we descried in the distance a caravan approaching. What could it be? Pilgrims from Mecca? But this was not the road to Mecca. As we drew nearer, it proved to be a company of Russian pilgrims returning from Mount Sinai—thirty-two of them, of whom only two were men. The greater number of women suggested that it was perhaps in performance of a vow that they had made a pilgrimage to the Convent of St. Catherine, which is a favorite shrine with the Russian peasants. Recognizing in us pilgrims bound to the same destination, they looked down upon us from the height of their camels with smiles of pleasure, and kept bowing and smiling till their camels had borne them past, and they quickly disappeared on the horizon of the desert.

These pilgrims were followed by a company of Bedaween, bound in the same direction, but on an errand of business instead of a pilgrimage of devotion. Bestriding their camels were huge sacks laden with charcoal, which the Arabs make from the few shrubs or stunted trees which they find in the mountains, and which form almost the only article which they can produce, for which they can obtain money, or anything which must be bought with money. They were now bound for Suez to sell their charcoal. To go and return would take them a week's time, and as the fruit of their journey and their labor, a camel's load would bring perhaps twenty francs, with which they would pur-

chase probably a sack of grain for their families, and a few ounces of tobacco for themselves.

After these two encounters, we saw no man that day. We marched on quite alone, and began to feel more and more the loneliness of the desert. Not only was there no man in sight, but not a living thing. The utter absence of life affected us strangely, as it brought the sense not only of solitude, but of silence. Even while it was yet broad day, there fell on us a silence as of the night. The earth grew calm and still, as if suddenly the course of nature had stopped, and all things had ceased to live. Although the Red Sea still gleamed in the distance, yet as we moved away from it, we could no longer hear the lapping of its waves ; and there was no sign of life on sea or land, or in the sky. Not a bird wheeled in the air ; not even an insect's hum broke the stillness of the desert. Even nature seemed to have hushed her voice ; no murmuring brook made music in our ears ; no sough of the wind in the pines whispered to us in the gloaming. The only sound that fell on the ear was the steady step of the camel crunching through the hard crust ; and when we passed through long stretches of soft sand, even that seemed muffled, as the broad foot, soft and springy as the tiger's, sank under us almost without a sound. So oppressive was the stillness that it was a relief to hear the song of the cameleer, though it had little music in it, for it was always in the minor key, and low and feeble, as if he trembled to hear the sound of his own voice in the deep solitude. It seemed as if we had gone out of the world, and entered the Halls of Eternal Silence, and were moving on into a mysterious realm, where the sound of human voices would be heard nevermore.

In studying the geography of the desert, the first lesson to be learned is to know what is meant by a wady.

Destitute as these broad stretches of barrenness are of springs, or running brooks, yet at times they are swept by terrific storms, when torrents dash down the mountain side, and plow deep furrows in the sandy waste. The dry beds which they leave behind are wadies. These wadies, depressed below the level of the surrounding plain, are the favorite places for pitching tents, as the banks on either side furnish a shelter from the winds that sweep over the desert. Several of these we crossed to-day, in which the half-dried mud showed that there had been recent rains. Wherever the moisture had touched, there were signs of vegetation. Dr. Post, who is always on the lookout for such treasures, found twenty new species of plants in one day, which he displayed with the delight of a discoverer, pointing out how nature had provided sustenance for them by furnishing them with thick leaves or long roots or little warts, which the microscope showed to be so many minute cells or sacs for water. Every traveller will have his attention called by his camel, if not by his guide, to a thorny bush of which the camel is very fond. Nor will the rider, if he be wise, urge on the poor beast which stops a moment to crop its leaves, for it is very aromatic, and sends up a fragrant smell into his face. Another bush which is common is the juniper—more properly the "broom" of the desert—under which we often found a shade for our midday meal.

Twice to-day were we reminded that we were on the track of the Israelites—once at Marah, the spring whose very name tells of its bitterness, and which, however sweetened by Moses, still disappoints the traveller, for indeed it is almost dried up. We found in it no flowing water at all; only digging in the sand, we discovered where a hidden spring was oozing away. A much larger spring, or group of springs, we found at Wady Ghurundel, the Elim of the

Scriptures, where we camped for the night. In these desert marches it is always an object to pitch one's tent near a spring. We were indeed supplied with water, which we took in at Suez, from the Sweet Water Canal, which brings it from the Nile. From this were filled the casks, which were slung on the backs of our camels. These are so precious that when unloaded for the night, and set up on end, they are kept locked lest the men should snatch forbidden draughts. Water for themselves they carry in water-skins. But though we were provided so as to be in no danger of dying by thirst, yet in the desert there is something refreshing even in the sight of flowing water. How could we fail to camp at a spot where Moses had arrested his march because he found, as he tells us, twelve springs and seventy palm-trees? Moses is gone, but the springs are still here. "Men may come and men may go, but they flow on forever." The Arab still comes to find water for himself and his camels at the same spring which quenched the thirst of the Israelites. On the very spot where the great Hebrew leader pitched his tent, we camped at the end of our second day's march. In the morning I went down to the springs, and found them hardly worthy of their ancient fame, or of the place which they still hold in sacred poetry, where "the shade of Elim's palm" is the type of almost heavenly rest. Neither in water nor in shade does Elim approach the Wells of Moses. Instead of a running brook or bursting fountains, one finds only a sluggish rivulet melting away in the sand, with a few straggling palms along its brink. Yet slender as it is, and although the water is somewhat brackish, it may be the very water of life on the desert. The Arabs came from the camp, and filled their water-skins, which they slung over their shoulders, and then threw on the backs of their camels. I bent down to the stream to drink, and though it was not like putting my

lips to "the moss-covered bucket that hung in the well," still there was a pleasure in drinking of the very springs of which Moses drank more than three thousand years ago.

But the traveller on the desert must not linger by bubbling streams or under palm-trees. While we had been here, the camels had been got ready, and we must up and away. To-day's march brought a change of scene, as we left behind the flat or rolling sandy plain, and entered into a region more wild and rugged. We found that this Peninsula was not an unbroken plain, stretching to the base of Sinai, but that "the wilderness" was a wilderness of mountains, through which one could make his way only by following the wadies that wound about in every direction, forming a perfect labyrinth, and that sometimes assumed the character of mountain defiles. This afternoon we pursued our course along these river beds till we came into one where a torrent in the course of ages had cut through successive strata of rock, cleaving them to the base of the hills, and forming a gorge almost like a cañon of the Rocky Mountains. This we followed in all its windings for several hours, till suddenly the cliffs opened, and before us lay the Red Sea, beyond which was a range of mountains, the line of which was broken by peaks shooting up here and there, like the cliffs of Capri, or the islands of the Greek Archipelago. It was now five o'clock, and the sun was sinking in the west, so that every point of that long serrated ridge stood up sharp and clear against the sky. Here was a scene which no artist could transfer to canvas. We had before us at once the mountains and the sea, and mountains on both sides of the sea. Enchanted and almost bewildered by the scene, as we came out upon a wide stretch of beach, we dismounted to walk, for the greater freedom of motion, and that we could stop and turn to every point of the horizon. Can I ever forget

that heavenly hour, and how soft was the light on the African mountains! As the sunset shone across the sea, it lighted up also the Arabian hills, above which there was a soft violet tint in the sky, which gradually faded away, and was succeeded by an intense blue, while high up in the heavens hung the moon, only two days to the full. Again we mounted our camels, and rode on for a mile or two, till rounding a point we discovered our tents in a little cove or inlet in the sandy hills, but a few rods from the shore. The spot seemed made for a camp, as it was sheltered from the winds, and the sand was firm and hard, so that the tent floor was smooth and clean. Here Moses camped by the Red Sea, and following the illustrious example, we camped, as it were, on the very shore, where in our waking moments all night long we heard the waters as they came rippling up the beach.

As our camp was by the sea, the temptation was irresistible, as we rose the next morning, to take a bath. One must have been three days on the desert to taste the sweetness of such a dip, as he lies down and lets the cool waters ripple over him. So keen was the pleasure of this new experience, that when we set out for our morning's tramp, as our way led along the beach (indeed in one or two places the rocks were so close that the camels had to step in the water, and in storms caravans are sometimes detained two or three days), I could not resist the impulse to walk for some distance in the edge of the sea, now and then dashing out to catch the foam of the breakers as they came rolling in. Of course it was not a very prudent thing to do. But nature will out. Boys will be boys, and I suppose an old boy may have the same privilege as a young one. At the moment I felt "glorious," although the Doctor thought me a little daft. Looking at me with his keen medical eye, he warned me that I was running a great

risk. My feet were soaked ; my hob-nailed shoes, bought in Cairo for mountain climbing, were badly water-logged ; and altogether I was in a bedraggled condition. But my spirits were so high that they kept me from any ill effect of this rashness. Mounting my camel, I threw my dripping legs over the pommel of the saddle, and thus hung them up to dry, leaving shoes and socks and trousers to take care of themselves. I found the enthusiasm of a march, which keeps the blood almost at fever heat, better than quinine to ward off the danger of taking cold.

And now appeared in the distance another welcome sight—a couple of camels, with Arabs at their side, and following on foot, with gun in hand, a solitary traveller! Meeting a traveller on the desert is an event, like hailing a ship at sea. We addressed the stranger in English and French, and to the latter he returned an answer. He proved to be an Italian, who had been for months in the mountains, searching for precious stones, and was now returning to Suez. "Would he take letters for us?" "With the greatest pleasure." In an instant down went the camels, and two travellers were standing beside them, pencil in hand, writing a few words to those who were far away. A moment more, and the traveller was gone. We did not see him again, but weeks after we learned that the letters thus written on the desert had reached their destinations at Beirut and Florence, and given great relief, as they carried the first tidings of our safety.

The sandy beach, which lies here between the sea and the mountains, broadens into a plain, and stretches on for some miles, so that it took us over two hours to cross it. As nowhere on the desert had we found more utter desolation, and nowhere did the sun blaze down with a fiercer heat, I am afraid some of my countrymen, passing over the "burning marl," have found that, in the temptations it offered to

cursing, there was a special appropriateness in the name it bears of the Wilderness of Sin! From this withering heat we found no refuge till we were once more in the gorges of the mountains, under the shelter of the overhanging cliffs. The day before we had come out of the mountains, and now our course led back into them. Turning to take a last look at the Red Sea (which we should not see again except at a great distance, from the top of Serbal and of Sinai), we entered a narrow pass called the Throat of the Morsel, which opened a way into the heart of the mountains, that grew more wild and grand as we advanced. Often we seemed to be shut in by walls, and had to come up to their very base before they opened their iron gates for us to pass through. The geological structure of the country had changed. We had been in a region of limestone, where the mountains were almost as white and glaring as the sand of the desert; but now the eye rested, with a sensation of relief, on huge masses of old red sandstone, the effect of whose rich colors was heightened by the outline of the cliffs and crags, which took on all fantastic shapes, looking like old castles and towers. One can imagine how they stand out against the sky when the sunset strikes upon them. We pitched our tents in a little valley that was set in an amphitheatre of mountains. Hard by we scaled the cliffs to penetrate the old turquoise mines of Maghara, that were worked in the time of the Pharaohs. The rocks still bear inscriptions graven upon them in one of the earlier dynasties. These take us far back in the ages, but the impression they give of long tracts of time is quite effaced by the mountains themselves. Our camp was at the foot of a peak which was one solid mass of old red sandstone, compared to the age of which the Pyramids of Egypt are but of yesterday.

CHAPTER V.

OUR BEDAWEEN COMPANIONS.

In the course of our marches, we had now come to the last day of the week, and set out this morning with buoyant spirits, inspired by the hope of a day of rest on the morrow. As if to make us prize it the more, Saturday was a day of unusual fatigue. Starting at seven o'clock, we walked for an hour, when the camels came up, and we mounted and rode four hours under a blazing sun. We found the heat as great in these wadies as on the open desert. They are so wide that except where the mountains rise in abrupt cliffs, it is not easy to get under their shadow; while the sun's rays are reflected from their sides, and poured into the valley below, which glows like a furnace. However, we bore it like martyrs. Indeed we should have been ashamed to complain, mounted as we were, while our poor Arabs trudged along by our side, their naked feet sinking in the burning sand. We looked down on them with pity; but they did not seem to be in need of pity, for they were chattering like monkeys, and laughing all the way, while we were as glum as our camels. This lightness of heart is the compensation which nature sometimes gives to weaker races, to enable them to bear the hardships of their lot. If these poor creatures could but see themselves as others see them, half naked and half starved, they would lie down on the desert and die; but a happy oblivion of their miserable condition makes them take life as cheerfully as the rest of us. The

contrast of their mirth with our grim silence and dogged endurance, set me to thinking about these strange children of the desert. Ever since we left Suez, I had been making observations not only on the country, but on the people. While keeping one eye on the horizon, taking in the general features of the landscape, with the other I had been quietly observing our motley company. Except the dragoman and the cook, our only companions are Bedaween. They are our guides by day and our guards at night. What sort of men are these to whom we commit our safety? Certainly as guides we could desire no better. The Arab knows the desert as the Indian knows the forest. Indeed he is made for the desert as truly as the camel. His very physique fits him for long marches. His body is light and his step is springy, yet he has not even shoes on his feet. The sole protection to the foot when going over the fiery sands, or even jagged rocks, is a pair of sandals so thin that I wondered how he could keep them on. Yet thus shod, or even with bare feet, he will spring up the rocks like a goat, or climb to the top of the highest mountain. It is true he goes in very light marching order. His limbs are naked, and he carries not an ounce of superfluous flesh on his bones. In all my acquaintance with the Bedaween, I never saw one who was fat like a negro. His only garments are a cotton shirt, and a sort of overall of coarse hair-cloth which serves the double purpose of a cloak by day and a coverlid by night.*

* Customs do not change on the desert in thousands of years. The Israelites were as poorly clad as our Arabs, their one garment sufficing for both day and night. Hence the significance as well as humanity of the law of Moses (Exodus xxii. 26, 27): "If thou at all take thy neighbor's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down: For that is his covering only [that is, his only covering]; it is his raiment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep?"

Thus lightly clad, but with sinews of steel which are better than a girdle about his loins, he will march all day, and when the night overtakes him, wrap himself up like a bundle, and lie down and sleep under the open sky. These long marches are made with little food. The Arabs eat little, because they have little to eat; they are "lean and hungry-looking," because they *are* hungry. It is not once in a month they have a full stomach. Hence, if by the favor of Allah they get a "square meal," they eat till it is gone. Set before them a roasted sheep, and they will gorge themselves like anacondas, even though they must fast the next day. In this utter thoughtlessness of the future, they are like children. Indeed if one were to describe them in a single word, he could hardly do it better than by saying that they are grown-up children. They are children in intelligence. No matter how old an Arab may be, how many suns and moons have rolled over his head, he remains to the day of his death as truly a child as when he was born into the world. Not only does he not know how to read and write, but he does not know his own age; he cannot tell the day, or even the year, of his birth. I doubt if one of our Bedaween could tell his age within five, even if he could within ten, years. Indeed he has no idea of time any more than of distance. Ask him how far it is to such a wady or such a camping-ground? He will answer "A good way." Indeed he never measures distance by miles, but only by hours, and even of these his ideas are of the vaguest kind. Ask him how long since such a thing happened, and he will answer "A good while ago." As he has no clear memory of the present, so he has no forecast of the future. Like a child, he lives only in the present. Like a child, he acts wholly upon impulse, upon the feeling of the moment. Like a child, his chief delight is in telling stories, and in listening to them. The tales of the

Arabian Nights are simply a series of brilliant pictures of what may be witnessed still when a group gathers about a story-teller in the bazaars of Cairo or Damascus, or round any camp-fire on the desert.

A people who are thus but children, must be treated like children, not like full-grown men. It is useless to present to them formal propositions or arguments. I should no more think of reasoning with a Bedawee than of reasoning with a baby. Give him backsheesh, and that he can understand, but argument he cannot understand. Try to govern him by appealing to his conscience or his common-sense, and you will make a dismal failure. He has little power of reflection or of judgment, and a very imperfect germ of a moral nature. The ordinary standard by which he measures men or actions is by the amount of backsheesh they give. A good man is one who gives "plenty backsheesh"; he who refuses this is to be accursed. Our men seem to regard me with a friendly eye as "the father of backsheesh." They look up to the Howadji as a kind of Providence, who is to rain gifts upon them, causing the desert literally to blossom as the rose. The honor they put upon me would be embarrassing were it not that they are easily satisfied. The Arab is pleased with a trifle which tickles his appetite or touches his vanity—a bit of gay color to wrap round his head, or even a pinch of tobacco to fill his pipe. I hope my rigid friends at home will not accuse me of corrupting the simplicity and innocence of these children of the desert, when I confess that the dragoman, wishing to exalt me in their esteem, brought me every morning a pouch of tobacco, to be dispensed in the course of the day. I was not prodigal of such riches, but when a poor fellow looked up to me appealingly, pointing to his empty pipe, I gave him a pinch to fill it. Never did a little seed, sown on good ground, bring forth a richer

crop of gratitude. If I had bestowed royal favors, their delight could not have been greater. They smiled at me all day long as they trudged by my side, and called down upon me all the blessings of the Prophet. Thus the Arab may be governed through his pleasures, his imagination, or his fear. If a leader among the Bedaween knows how to amuse them up to a certain point, all the while keeping a tight rein upon them, he will have no trouble. The greater the awe of his power, the greater the liberty with which they can be indulged. But they must never be allowed to forget that he is their master. If he will but please their fancy, and at the same time impress them with a sense of his own authority, and thus keep them in strict subjection, he will find them docile and obedient.

So far, then, I was pleased with my new companions—a pleasure which was all the greater because it was mingled with surprise. I had been accustomed to think of the Bedaween as born cut-throats, as by nature thieves and robbers, and who would not scruple at murder. But our experience has been of the most pleasant character. We have had them in our service for weeks, and more faithful servants, or those more harmless and inoffensive, I never saw. We cannot help becoming attached to creatures so simple, who seem to live in our favor, and who follow us like pet spaniels.

Whenever we dismounted to walk, I observed my cameleer looking wistfully at the vacant seat. He would not have presumed to vault into his master's saddle; but sometimes I gave him a smile and a nod, when he climbed up at the rear, and seating himself a few inches in front of what looked more like a piece of tarred rope than a respectable tail, with his naked and swarthy legs high in air, rode in triumph.

Among those attached to me as my retainers was a boy,

who sometimes had the honor of leading my camel. He was a bright little Arab, and never looked up to me without a smile on his face. Perhaps he saw a smile in the face looking down upon him. I taught him one English word—"good"—and the manner in which he would repeat after me "Good, good, good," was the amusement of the whole party. How patiently he trudged along from day to day, always merry, without a care—a creature of the sun, living in its beams. Poor little Selim! where is he now? Watching the flock of black goats on the hillside? Does he ever think of the Howadji? The Howadji sends him his blessing. May he too have goats and camels, and a black tent, and the fairest daughter of the tribe for his little wife, and find many an occasion to chuckle within him, "Good, good, good!"

Of course there are Bedaween and Bedaween. I am far from thinking that all are quite so gentle as ours thus far have been. More than once we have met a savage-looking fellow, who seemed to be roaming about without any purpose, and who certainly looked like a brigand, with his cutlass at his side and his blunderbuss on his back. What style of address he might have used had he met one of us alone, I cannot say. Perhaps he would not have stood upon forms of politeness. But seeing us well attended and well defended, instead of demanding our money or our life, he asked only tobacco to fill his pipe, and went on his way perhaps a little disappointed, but not altogether sullen and threatening.

I ought to add, although it is anticipating, that this favorable opinion of the Bedaween was a good deal modified several weeks later, when we got among the robber tribes on the border of Palestine. But for the present we were among the gentle Tawarah, the Arabs of Sinai, of whom I here record my first impressions.

Such musings beguiled the weariness of the way. Towards noon we descried across the plain a projecting cliff, to which we directed our course, and dismounting, threw ourselves under its shade. The dragoman brought the saddles from the camels, and placed them as pillows for our heads. Thus stretched at length, we felt how grateful beyond all words was "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." An hour's rest was followed by our midday meal, which was enlivened by the appearance of an unexpected guest. As we were taking our oranges and figs, there rode up on his camel an Arab of somewhat commanding appearance, whom our dragoman instantly recognized and announced as the Sheikh of all the Bedaween of Sinai. He wore no sign of his rank except a red silk tunic, and yet he is held in awe throughout the Peninsula, and has among these wild tribes an almost unlimited authority. Of course we could not be wanting in proper respect to such a guest. Not to be outdone by Oriental hospitality, we begged him to alight and partake of our repast—an invitation which he did not wait to have repeated. To tell the truth, he seemed to be blessed with a comfortable appetite, and made no objection to the quality of our fare. After he had feasted to his heart's content, and while he still sat on our outspread rugs, with his legs curled under him like a Grand Turk, and was smoking his pipe, it occurred to me, with true editorial instinct, that it would be a good opportunity to "interview" him, and I signified my desire to enter into a conversation, and was about to begin in the abrupt American way, when Dr. Post checked me, intimating that an Oriental must be approached with a more formal courtesy. He asked him, therefore, a few questions in regard to his family, expressing the liveliest interest that the long line of emirs from which he was descended, and from which he derived his authority, might

never cease. At this the old man beamed upon us, recognizing the delicate compliment, and was in the best mood to impart the desired information. Thus encouraged, I began :

"How many Bedaween are there in the Peninsula of Sinai ?"

"I have three thousand men-at-arms." This is the way in which a population is reckoned, by the number of their spears ; of men capable of bearing arms. On the desert one never meets an Arab without a sword at his side or a gun slung on his back. The sword is commonly old and rusty, and the gun plugged up at the muzzle, showing that it is seldom fired off. But either sword or gun is the badge of a man-at-arms, who, in case of necessity, may be called by his sheikh into the field. I could not help thinking that such a rabble, armed only with flintlocks or matchlocks, could not be very formidable. Soldiers they could hardly be called. I never saw any of them training in companies, or showing signs of military discipline. A few hundred men, armed with breechloaders, could march anywhere from one end of the Peninsula to the other. But it would have been a want of tact to raise a question as to the skill or prowess of the Bedaween of Sinai : I only sought to know their numbers.

Leaving the field of war for that of love, I asked about their marriage customs—how the daughters of the desert were wooed and won. The old sheikh took his long pipe from his mouth, and while the smoke curled into the air, he made answer in substance thus :

"Among the Arabs a maiden has nothing whatever to say in regard to her marriage, being subject in all things to the authority of her parents. She does not even see the man whom they have chosen for her, or look upon his face until the affair is settled, when she is carried veiled to

his tent, and then for the first time may uncover her face, and see before her her husband."

"And how are these arrangements made?"

"If a man of the tribe applies for the hand of a woman, he makes a bargain as if he were buying a sword or a gun. The father expects compensation, which varies according to the wealth of the bridegroom and the rank of the bride. The price is generally reckoned, not in money, but in camels, which constitute almost the only wealth of the desert. If the suitor be one of the maiden's own relatives or near friends, a single camel may be a sufficient compensation, where two camels would be expected from a stranger. The latter is a large price, for a man on the desert who owns six or eight camels is accounted rich. A poor fellow" (such as would be called in our Southern States one of the "low down whites") "might get a girl of his own inferior class for one or two Turkish pounds" (five or ten dollars).

"In fixing the value of a bride, I suppose chief regard is paid to beauty?"

"Not at all. Beauty scarcely enters into the account. The supreme consideration is the rank of her family. The Arabs are very proud of their family, and she who can boast of belonging to the first of her tribe is more prized than she who is only fair to look upon." This took me quite by surprise. I could not understand how the consideration of *rank* could have place among these barefooted children of the desert. They all seemed to me to stand on a common level of poverty. It was like an aristocracy among beggars. But Dr. Post assured me that it was so—that distinctions of rank are as marked among them as in the nobility of any country in Europe. He said the Arab families traced back their line through generations, and were very proud of their long descent—a pride which sur-

vived even in the lowest degree of worldly estate. He had had among his patients a descendant of the great Saladin, who fought with Richard Cœur de Lion ; a man who was blind, and whom he restored to sight by removing a cataract from his eye, and who was yet too poor to buy himself a pair of spectacles ; and yet neither his poverty nor his rags could make him forget the blood that flowed in his veins. No scion of a royal house could be more proud of his kingly birth. In other cases he had known emirs who were regular tramps. One such used to come around to beg, mounted on a brood mare worth a hundred and fifty pounds! He had a servant with him, whom he sent in to prefer his request for alms, and who pleaded the high rank of his master as a reason why he could not work. To judge from the tone of both master and servant, it was an honor conferred on the giver, that he might bestow his charity on one of such long and proud descent.

Fearing lest a marriage so concluded might not be always happy, our next question was "Suppose the woman who is thus married without her consent, does not like the husband that has been given her, how is she to get rid of him? Is there any mode of relief?"

The old man shook his head as he answered: "It is not an easy matter. When a woman is married, she is in the power of her husband. If he gets tired of her, he has but to tell her that she is divorced, and she goes back to her father's house. He does not even give her a writing of divorcement, as Moses commanded the Hebrews."

This seemed to place the advantage all on one side. But pressing the matter a little further, we found that among the Arabs, as everywhere else in the world, there is such a thing as a woman's revenge, and that if her lord is too much of a tyrant, she can at least make him sit uneasy on his throne. If she is intent on seeking relief from her

condition, the only way, said the sheikh, is to make her husband's life so uncomfortable that he shall of his own motion give her a divorce and send her away.

"Then," said Dr. Post, "if the wife does not like her husband, and wants to get rid of him, she must torment his life out of him and make him so miserable that he will be glad to let her go." This hit the nail so squarely on the head that the old sheikh's eyes fairly snapped, and he chuckled as he answered "Yes, yes, that's it exactly—that's the way to do it." We thought we had heard of such things elsewhere than among the Bedaween—of many a young bride sacrificed for position or for money; for whom there was no help, except as she "tormented her husband's life out of him," till at last divorce or death brought her release.

To do the Arabs justice, it should be added that when the husband has put his wife away, he cannot claim her again. She may go to her family, or she may seek another protector in the tribe. If he accepts her and defends her, then the husband must give her a divorce.

I was curious to know about the form of Government, of which the sheikh could speak by authority. It is patriarchal, just as it has been from the earliest times, and passes from sire to son through many generations. Our friend who was sitting before us could trace his line for hundreds of years. His power had come down from former generations, and from him would pass to his descendants after him.

But how about the administration of justice in a country where there is no law, at least no written code, no lawyers or gentlemen of the jury, and even no prison or place of execution? Yet there must be some kind of rude justice, or society could not exist. The sheikh explained that in offences against property, one who steals from another

must restore not only the amount, but many-fold. If the thief runs away, the man whom he has robbed need not trouble himself, for he has only to levy on his nearest relations. Anybody belonging to the family will do. He may seize the property of a brother or cousin, who in turn must look after his rascally kinsman. This is better than all the laws in the world against stealing, at least all laws which could be administered against Arabs on the desert, for it enlists the family feeling, which is stronger than the sense of right and wrong, or even the fear of individual punishment. A man who commits a theft brings retribution on his whole household, who must suffer if he escapes, while in any case his act covers them with disgrace.

As to offences against the person, there is one rigid and inexorable law—a law older than Roman law, for Moses found it on the desert more than three thousand years ago; it is the *lex talionis*—blood for blood, life for life. We questioned the sheikh very closely in regard to the blood feud, of which we had heard so much. He answered, without any reserve, that by the immemorial laws of the Arabs, if one of the tribe killed another, the brother of the murdered man could take the law into his own hands, and kill the murderer. Not only was he at liberty to do so, but he must do it—it was a point of honor, the neglect of which would be a disgrace. If the murderer ran away, then the slayer need not go in pursuit of him. There is no "law's delay" on the desert to prevent his taking his revenge. If he cannot find the murderer, he may kill the murderer's brother, or his cousin. I believe the license of revenge does no farther go than to this degree of relationship; but within this range of consanguinity the avenger may exact life for life. To this extent indeed he must go. Some life he must take. The blood of his brother cries from the ground, and must not go unavenged. But if he kills the brother or

cousin, he cannot then come and kill the murderer, for the law of revenge is satisfied. One life has paid for the other life.

This seems a terrible law—that of blood for blood; and yet it is perhaps the best law for the desert, for the restraint it imposes on the passions of the people. The Arab knows that the shedding of blood will bring on a family feud, that will not end till the hands of his victim's brother are imbrued in his own blood; that from the instant he sheds blood, there is a mark upon his forehead like that on the forehead of Cain, giving license to whoever meets him to kill him—a retribution hovering round him from which he cannot escape. Though he mount the swiftest dromedary, and flee across the desert, though he hide in the mountains, the avenger of blood is on his track, and sooner or later he must pay the penalty of his deed. The knowledge of this is the most powerful preventive of crime.

This ended our conversation, and the sheikh rose to depart. We shook hands, and assured him of the pleasure it had been to meet him, to which he responded with true Oriental courtesy, and then mounted his camel and rode away, with a dignity that became the lord of the desert.

Nor did we linger long behind. We had enough to think of as we mounted our camels and rode on. Toward the close of the afternoon we entered a valley girt round by awful summits, where by the camel-path stood a huge boulder of red granite, which the Arabs say is the very one struck by Moses out of which the water flowed. The setting sun was tinging the giant heights and precipices of Mount Serbal as we passed through the Vale of Rephidim, in which the Israelites fought with the Amalekites. Soon we perceived by the palm trees that we were entering the oasis of Feiran, the great oasis of the wilderness of Sinai.

CHAPTER VI.

A SABBATH IN THE WILDERNESS.

No matter where a man may be—at home or abroad, in the city or in the wilderness—the week comes to an end, and brings the day of rest—blessed day—never more welcome than on the desert. Some travellers ignore it, claiming that the strict rules of Sabbath observance which obtain in Christian communities at home, have no place in the wilderness, where no man is. A caravan on the desert is like a ship at sea, which must keep on her voyage. Travellers are exposed to greater dangers here than on the ocean. Not only may they be overtaken by storms; they may be attacked by robbers, who would strip them of everything, and leave them to perish by exposure or by famine; so that it may be a matter of necessity and mercy to press on till the point of danger is passed. I presume not to judge those who so reason and so act. "I speak not of commandment," but of privilege; and only this I say, that they lose an experience which comes but rarely in a lifetime, and the loss of which they will always regret. Nowhere is the day more needed for the physical rest which it brings. A week on the desert is a great trial of strength and endurance, and one needs more time to recover from it than the few hours of night. Rest is needed for man and beast. As soon as we entered this oasis, even the camels seemed to have an instinct that a time of rest had come. Their Sabbath began, according to the Hebrew custom, with Saturday evening. No sooner were they un-

loaded of their burdens than the poor tired beasts were turned loose to wander by the brookside and drink at will, and to crop the herbage that grew somewhat luxuriantly in the valley. Our tents had been pitched on the margin of the stream, the very sight of which was cooling to eyes that had rested so long only on burning rocks and sands. The change was a relief both to body and mind, for the mind too had been under a constant tension, which needed to be relaxed. And so, when we came within the circuit of these hills, and under the shade of these palms, we said, This is our rest, for we have desired it. We felt the strain of the week taken off, and began to unbend, and soon sank down into delicious and undisturbed repose.

And when the morning broke, with returning consciousness came the blissful thought that we had not to stir this day. No voice from the desert whispered, Rise and march. That alone was enough to quiet our nerves; the heart beat regularly, and the blood flowed smoothly in our veins. To-day, at least, no mortal care should seize our breasts; these long, golden hours were reserved for tranquil thoughts and sweet communings with our own hearts, with nature, and with God.

The Sabbath had come. We knew it as soon as we opened our eyes. Not by the unaccustomed stillness which in populous cities or in villages marks the change from the days of the week, for the silence of the desert is so profound that it cannot be deepened. But there was something which was not silence: it was Peace. There was something in the deep blue heavens that were bending over us, that seemed to say, This is the day that the Lord hath made. To enjoy it to the full, we sought for greater retirement than that of our tent. Dr. Post, looking round for the natural features of the oasis in which we were camped, espied across the stream a solitary tree, an

acacia (the tree which furnished the shittim wood of which the Ark was made), which he pronounced the most fully proportioned tree he had seen on the desert. For a wonder, it was of considerable size, and offered a grateful shade. The air under it was cool and refreshing. To this spot we removed our camp-chairs and a table, and even our iron bedsteads, that, if need were, we might lie down and rest; and here we spent a long, sweet Sabbath, full of a heavenly calm, with which all nature seemed to be in sympathy.

Looking out from under our tree, it seemed as if all living things were enjoying the rest of the day. One must have been far in the desert to realize how sweet as well as strange it was to see two or three little birds, not bigger than sparrows, hopping about. They were very tame, at least they had not been scared by the frequent presence of men, and ventured quite near us, as if to make our acquaintance; and as they piped their feeble notes, it seemed as if they were trying to sing a song of home, to cheer the lonely travellers. But the creatures that enjoyed the day the most were the camels. They knew that it was Sunday, and enjoyed it as if it had been made for them. Just see them now! I have been watching them as they roam about at their own sweet will. They do not invade our privacy, for they do not seek the shade, but the sunshine. But sun or shade or water—all is free to them to-day. Here is an old tramper of the desert now standing before me. I hear a singular gurgling noise, as if a brook were running down his throat. He is sucking up the water out of the cistern which nature has provided as a reservoir within him, into his stomach. Who would not rest on such a day, when even the brute creation feel the blessedness of repose?

But we found beneath the shade more than mere phys-

ical rest. Our tree was but a little alcove in a great temple, of which the full proportions—walls and columns and domes—were in the mighty amphitheatre of the hills. Here we were in a deep valley, surrounded by mountains; while above us towered Serbal, like Mont Blanc above the Vale of Chamouni. Never did I realize before the full meaning, as well as beauty, of the words, "The mountains bring peace"; they are so great and strong, standing fast forever, that they preach peace to mortals vexed with petty cares. That peace encompassed us round to-day. We seemed to be in a place of prayer; and though there was no sound of the church-going bell to awaken these solitudes, yet we had found a sanctuary in which we could worship as truly as beneath the swelling dome or in the long-drawn aisle. Here we could sit and read our Bibles, and worship God.

We had not indeed forgotten this worship on any day of the week. Making a little family, we never forgot the blessed institution of family prayers. This it was not always possible to observe in our tent; but after we had begun the day's march, we found by the wayside "the shadow of a great rock," or some other quiet nook, where we could stop to read our Bibles. Dr. Post had always in his pocket his Arabic Bible, which is said to be very much like the Hebrew, from which he read the account of the wanderings of the Israelites in the wilderness. It was quite natural that an Eastern book, translated into an Eastern language, should preserve a certain *couleur locale*—a reflection not only of the natural scenery amid which, but of the manners and customs of the people among whom and by whom, it was written—not always retained in our Western version; and I found that the Bible so read and translated into English for my benefit, had a freshness and beauty which I had not perceived before. The story of

the wanderings became more real since we were amid the very scenes through which the Israelites passed. And after reading this, how sweet to think that we could commit ourselves to the care of Him who had led them across these very deserts and through these very mountains, going before them as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night! More blessed still was the privilege of committing to Him those dearer to us than our own life. Never in our prayers do we forget the loved ones far away. Across the desert and the sea our hearts go to them with a love and a longing that distance does but make the stronger. Perhaps He who is in every place, and whose ear is ever open, will hear our lowly cry from the sands of the desert, and fold them in His arms of infinite tenderness.

While enjoying the natural beauty of this valley among the mountains, we do not forget that it is a spot of great historical interest. It was a scene of stirring events in the history of the Hebrews, and a centre of monastic life in the early Christian centuries. Here camped the Israelites. They fought to obtain possession of this valley; and standing here to-day, it is easy to see why they fought for it; it was simply to get water. They had marched across the desert; they had toiled wearily through barren mountains, where no stream or fountain quenched their thirst. Moses had struck the rock from which gushed forth water to keep them from perishing. But a little in advance of him was a valley watered by an ever-flowing stream. Access to it was barred by the Amalekites, and he fought to force a passage. I am well aware that there is a question among Biblical scholars whether the mountain pass through which we have just come is Rephidim, but such is the universal tradition; and so also has tradition fixed on the sharp peak which rises up right in front of us as the one which Moses ascended to pray while the battle was going on, and

where Aaron and Hur held up his hands. Late in the afternoon we climbed this peak, and stood on the very spot where Moses knelt and prayed, and looked on the very scene on which he looked on that eventful day which was to decide the fate of Israel, when his hopes rose and fell, for the battle was long, and ended not till the going down of the sun. It was sunset when we stood there, and it required little imagination to conceive of the great Hebrew Lawgiver at that hour rising from his knees, his prayers turned to praise as he saw the Amalekites fleeing through the passes of the mountains.

Some I know would look on this scene with very different feelings. A popular lecturer has undertaken to expose the Mistakes of Moses, and in following the narrative of the Exodus, he denounces the entrance of the Israelites into the Peninsula of Sinai as an unprovoked invasion of the territory of a peaceful neighbor—an act which was not merely a mistake, but a crime. This censure of Moses is not new. There is nothing in the Bible which is a more frequent subject of attack than the alleged cruelty of the Hebrew leader in forcing his way among an unoffending people. But let not the critics be too hasty in judgment. We must take large views of things. The Exodus from Egypt was one of those great migrations of nations of which we read in history, movements accomplished by great suffering and great sacrifices, as when, in this very case, the whole Hebrew people perished in the wilderness, yet through which comes at last the deliverance of nations and the general progress of mankind. Colonel Ingersoll is an ardent advocate of liberty, and a fierce denouncer of slavery in every form. We presume he would think slaves justified in fleeing from bondage, and seeking their freedom, even if the end could not be gained except at the price of the sacrifice of precious lives—their own and

their masters. If, in the times before our civil war, two millions of slaves had risen up in the night, and made an exodus from the South, their "house of bondage"; and if, in order to find a refuge far away—a lodge in some vast wilderness, where they could enjoy their freedom, with none to molest or make them afraid—they had started for some remote and almost uninhabited region of Northern Mexico; and, when marching on in great battalions, with their wives and little children, had been stopped in their progress by bands of Apache Indians; would it have been a great wrong for them to force their way?

Let the assailants of Moses sneer as they will. The more I see of the desert, the more the miracle of the Exodus grows upon me, and the more profound the reverence I feel for that stern old Hebrew Cromwell, who was the leader of the Israelites in that great crisis of their history. In all our marches the past week, that presence has never been absent. The figure of Moses is the one great figure which gives supreme interest to this land of desolation. When we pass through deep mountain gorges, the cliffs on either hand take on a new interest as I think that they have looked upon Moses as he passed by, perhaps with a countenance grave and downcast, bearing the burden of a nation on his mighty heart. Often doubtless did he lie down in these dark mountain recesses, with only a stone for a pillow, and look up to the stars shining in this clear Arabian sky, and wonder if the God whom he worshipped would carry him through. In the battle which was fought on this ground more than three thousand years ago, it was not only the Israelites fighting with the Amalekites: it was the battle of civilization with barbarism. Never was a truer, as well as more eloquent saying than that of a great student of history, Bunsen: that "History was born on the night when Moses led the Israelites out of the land

of Goshen." Egypt indeed had been an empire for we know not how many centuries or millenniums. But it had no history. Its record, preserved to us in monuments and inscriptions, is a mere chronology—a catalogue of successive dynasties, as utterly dry and dead as the mummies of its buried kings. That is not history. But the Exodus was the beginning of a series of events, unfolding through centuries, which marked a steady movement of the nations. When Moses fought with Amalek, he carried in his right hand the destiny of millions yet unborn. If he had perished on that fatal day, there would have been no Commonwealth of England, and no Commonwealths in New England; the dial of human progress would have been set back a thousand years.

This oasis has been made famous also in a history more recent than that of Moses. In the early centuries it was a great resort for monks. A Convent stood on a hill which is but a few hundred yards from our camp, where its ruins are yet to be seen; while all round the valley the sides of the hill are pierced with cells, in which the monks passed their lives. They were not, strictly speaking, hermits, for hermits live in solitude; but Cenobites, who live in communities. There must have been a large community here, to judge from the number of cells by which the mountains are honeycombed. We climbed up to some of them, and found them hewn in the solid rock, and but a few feet square. Yet these were the only homes of the monks, in which they passed their lives in prayer and meditation. Here they ate and slept and prayed and died—in little stone cells, hardly high enough for a man to stand upright in, though long enough for him to lie down; which indeed had more of the shape and dimensions of a sarcophagus than of a place of human habitation. Nor is one surprised to learn that the monks were buried at

last in the same rock-hewn sepulchres in which they had passed a living death. For such a religion I have no sympathy. Such lives are of no benefit to anybody. Self-denial for the sake of doing good to others, is according to the law of Christ. But suffering endured as a penance, self-inflicted torture, is far away from the spirit of the Gospel. I can feel no admiration for that religion which thinks to merit heaven by making earth a hell.

But the day was drawing to a close, and we were in no mood to indulge in criticism even of the false piety of a former age. Rather would we give ourselves up to the tender associations of the place and the hour. To complete the charm of this perfect day, to-night the moon reached the full. The scene was unearthly as she rose above the tops of the mountains, and shone down into the deep, lonely valley. It seemed as if the peace of God were resting on the face of the earth—not

"The peace that sages in meditation found,"

but a peace from the Infinite Presence, which filled the spaces of the silent air; and as if more than one sleeper on the desert might have a vision in his dreams of a ladder whose top touched heaven, with angels ascending and descending upon it. How can we help serious thoughts in the strange scenes in which we are? Here we tarry but a night; to-morrow we resume our march. The wanderings of the Israelites are a type of that pilgrimage which we are all making through the wilderness of this world. If we are only marching in the right direction, we need not fear to move on day by day, glad to know that each day's march brings us nearer to the end:

"Here in the body pent,
Absent from Thee I roam,
Yet nightly pitch my moving tent,
A day's march nearer home."

CHAPTER VII.

THE ASCENT OF MOUNT SERBAL.

We had not yet come unto Mount Sinai, but we had come to another mountain which disputes with Sinai the claim to be the Mount of the Law, and which cannot be passed by without a fixed and steady gaze. No traveller on the desert fails to see Serbal, for it is of such imposing majesty, standing alone and dwarfing all surrounding heights, that it is seen afar off above the tops of the mountains. Nor is it visible only on the Peninsula, but at a great distance beyond, both on land and sea. Those who pass up and down the Red Sea catch sight of it as the great object on the horizon; and beyond the waters both of Suez and of Akaba, it is seen at once from the shores of Africa and of Arabia.

I shall never forget a view of Serbal that we had from the top of the Nakb el-Budra (the Pass of the Sword's Point), one or two long marches before we came under his shadow. We had been all day moving slowly through a succession of wadies, which were like mountain gorges, when we came into a narrow pass, where our advance was stopped by high barriers of rock, which we scaled only by turning from side to side as by a winding stair. When we had climbed to the top, a new horizon was opened before us far to the South, which uncovered a sea of mountains, in the midst of which uprose Serbal, towering above them all. From that moment we never lost sight of this monarch of mountains, but were all the

while approaching nearer and nearer, till now we were in his very presence.

But to see Serbal is one thing, and to ascend it is quite another. This is not in the usual programme of a pilgrimage to Mount Sinai. Although the caravan route winds round its base, most travellers only look up with awe at that majestic form, and pass by at a respectful distance. They almost shudder at the sight of its tremendous cliffs, and are quite willing to leave them unscaled. But Dr. Post, who is of an aspiring mind in such matters, was not so easily satisfied. No sooner did Serbal show its head in the distance than it seemed to fascinate him, and he began to throw out hints like these: "What a grand thing it would be to climb yonder awful height!" and "How far below us, in every sense, should we leave ordinary pilgrims!" until he gradually poisoned my innocent mind with his ambition. The dragoman said nothing, for he was not allowed to say anything, his only place being to carry out the will of his imperious masters. He only suggested meekly that, as it was a long day's march, we should need to start very early in the morning. To this we had no objection. Indeed having once got the idea into our heads, the only way to get it out was to make the attempt. This once decided upon, the idea haunted me even in my dreams. Half a dozen times in the night I rose and went to the door of the tent, and looked out to see if there were not some faint forerunner of the dawn; but the full moon still rode high in heaven, and poured down a flood of light on mountain and valley, and rock and ruin, and on the white tents, around which Arabs and camels were sleeping motionless as if in death. But long before daybreak there was a stir in the camp. The fire was lighted, the cook was bustling about, and the coffee sent forth a sweet smell. The cameleers had brought up our beasts to the

tents, where they were lying stretched on the soft sand, waiting for their riders. The moon had but just dipped behind the hills, and the sun had not yet given a sign of his coming, when we vaulted into the saddle and set out upon our march, following a trail up a wady worn in the course of ages by a torrent, which had washed down great boulders that at every step blocked our advance. The path turned and twisted, till it seemed almost impossible to force a passage. How far we went on camels' backs, I cannot tell; certainly not over three or four miles, for it would have taken a quick stepper to make two miles an hour up such a pass. This slow march would have been very tiresome, and wearied us even at the beginning of the day, were it not that our eyes were soon fascinated by the scene which was beginning to dawn upon us. As we crept slowly upward, streaks of light announced the coming of the day; and as soon as the sun rose above the Eastern mountains, it struck across the valley to the grander heights before us. Serbal, though standing alone, is not a solitary peak, but rather a group, or a giant mass, splintered into columnar shapes, thus making five separate columns, which were touched in succession by the sun as he rose higher and higher. The effect recalled a memorable sunrise on the Himalayas, with this difference, that there it fell on glittering pinnacles of snow, where now it lighted up only great masses of rock; but as these were of red granite, they seemed to be kindled by the morning sun, so that if the Persian fire-worshippers had been here, they might well have uncovered their heads, and stood silent and reverent at the sight of those flaming altars in the sky.

For about two hours our camels kept on their toilsome climb, till we came to a point where they could not move another step. Here was just space among the rocks for

them to kneel down, and be lightened of their burdens. The rest of the ascent must be made on foot. Our way led up a chasm that cleft in twain two of the massive forms of Serbal. We started, not very vigorously, but slowly, to reserve our strength. We soon found that we had need of it, for we were in for a task requiring our utmost endurance. The ascent was often at an angle of forty-five degrees; indeed in many cases it was almost perpendicular. It was climbing over huge granite boulders weighing hundreds of tons, or turning around them. Sometimes we fell upon our hands and feet, and could only crawl where we could not walk upright. So we went, feeling our way around the points of rocks, and creeping along the edge of precipices, where a single false step would have given us a fearful, probably a fatal, plunge. Indeed I could not have got on at all but for the Arabs, who led the way, springing forward like catamounts, and clinging to the rocks with their bare feet, and reaching out their long, sinewy arms to grasp mine, which were extended upward, while another swarthy creature would come behind to give me a "boost." Once or twice I sank down quite exhausted, and the dragoman cast on me a look of pity as he said "I so sorry!" and even Dr. Post, who thought I had found the undertaking more than I bargained for, advised me to give it up. But it is not in my nature to give up a thing when once I have undertaken it. I asked only for an occasional breathing spell.

While lying stretched on the rocks, lest the scene should become too tragic, it was relieved by a touch of the comic, which is seldom absent in the society of my irrepressible countrymen. Accompanying us up the mountain was the other party of which I have spoken, in which were a couple of college students. Young America does not pay much respect to times and places. Just as my thoughts were

becoming subdued to a solemn mood, that might best find expression in the fearful lines beginning

"My thoughts on awful subjects roll,"

I heard coming round the cliff a strain of a different character. It was not exactly Church-music, and yet it sounded familiar. Where had I heard it? It began

"The shades of night were falling fast,
As through an Alpine village passed
A youth, who bore, 'mid snow and ice,
A banner with the strange device—
Excelsior!"

and was followed by the chorus so familiar to college boys, and which is given out with the greater force of lungs, as it is incomprehensible in meaning: "Upidee! Upida!" And as if this were not enough to banish all the sacred associations of the place, next came this still more irreverential strain:

"The waiter roared it through the hall—
We don't give bread with one fishball!"

These were strange sounds indeed to be echoed back from the cliffs and down the abysses of Mount Serbal. But they did me more good than the most majestic psalm, for the sudden revulsion of feeling made me forget my weariness, and a few minutes enabled me to recover breath for a fresh spring. And so at last, pushed and pulled and hauled by the Arabs, and almost carried in their black arms, I reached the top. The ascent had taken six hours.

We found the summit not a peak so much as a dome—a rounded mass of granite. Serbal is about the height of Mount Washington, but this gives no impression of its real grandeur: for while Mount Washington rises by a gradual slope, its sides being covered with forests, Serbal rises so perpendicularly that its five separate masses appear, as I have said, like gigantic columns, lifting their

heads against the sky. We stood on the brow of a precipice, which might well make one shudder as he advanced to the point of the cliff, and looked over to a depth of four thousand feet.

And what at last did we gain by all this? Only the disappointment that waits on ambition? or enough to repay us for the fatigue of this tremendous climb? We saw beneath us a panorama as extensive as that seen from the Righi; only, instead of the smiling cantons of Switzerland, with green fields and waving forests and crystal lakes, we saw only the barrenness of utter desolation, yet in such awful forms as produced an impression of indescribable grandeur. All round us the horizon was piled with mountains. Indeed the whole Peninsula is a sea of mountains, in which peaks on peaks are tossed up like waves. It seems as if they had been thrown up out of a lake of fire; as if in a remote geological period, when the body of our planet was a molten mass, and material forces were acting with an intensity and violence of which we have no conception, in some tremendous convulsion the flaming crests were tossed against the sky, and then suddenly arrested by the Creator's hand, which held them fixed in their utmost wildness, so to remain forever. But it may be a question whether this jagged outline was caused by throwing up or by wearing down. My companion, surveying the scene, not "with a poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling," but with the patient observation of science, reports that "these peaks are all water-worn, the result of the gradual degradation of masses which were probably overlaid by stratified rocks, and entombed under the sea; and that after their submersion and emergence, and the wearing away of their sandstone and limestone coverings, the granite masses were splintered by lightning, shivered by frost, cracked by the heat of the sun, and worn by storms, into

their present forms." Hence their infinite variety. There is not one long chain, like the Pyrenees or the Apennines, of a general average height and form, but innumerable peaks, sharp and pointed, as if piercing the sky, while other summits are broad and dome-like, as if the very heavens might rest on the support of such "everlasting hills." And these mountains are unlike those of other countries in being more barren and desolate. I have seen mountains in all parts of the world, and have found in almost every case that they had some feature of beauty mingled with their ruggedness, which took away somewhat of their desolate character. However lofty their elevation, their ascent was gradual, extending over many miles, whereby they sloped down gently to the valleys below, and their lower sides were clothed with vegetation, which relieved their sterner aspect and softened their rugged grandeur. Not so here. The mountains of Sinai rise up abruptly from the plain, looking more like columns than pyramids; and as their substance is the hardest granite, which affords little support to vegetation, they have a bare, bald aspect, for which they are sometimes called the Alps unclothed.

Between these awful mountains, and winding round among them in countless turnings, are the wadies of which I have spoken—river beds, through which, in the time of rains and storms, there pour furious torrents, which as quickly pass away to the sea, leaving behind them only the traces of the ruin they have made. Of these wadies, one here obtains the most complete view. See how they wind and wind, turning hither and thither in endless confusion! Here then we have the complete anatomy of the Sinaitic Peninsula. One takes it in at a glance in its whole extent, from end to end, and from side to side. It is enclosed on the east and the west by

the two arms of the Red Sea—the Gulfs of Suez and of Akaba. The former seemed to lie at our feet, and following it with the eye, we could almost see the city of Suez itself. The Gulf of Akaba was farther away, and was hidden from us by intervening mountains. It lies in a depression, but over it and beyond it we saw distinctly the long range of the mountains of Arabia, as across the Gulf of Suez we saw the mountains of Africa; while southward rose the great heights of Mount Catherine and Um Shommer. What a glorious vision of mountains to be embraced in one view! One such sight were enough to repay a hundred times the fatigue of our climb to the summit of Serbal:

> "'Twere worth ten years of peaceful life—
> One glance at that array."

And what memories did those names recall! That Gulf of Suez was the sea across which Moses led the Israelites; on the Gulf of Akaba sailed the fleets of Solomon; while turning northward the eye rested on a long line of white cliffs—the escarpment of a table-land which was the Great and Terrible Wilderness in which the Israelites wandered forty years. Thus a wonderful nature was chosen for a wonderful history. It is this mingling of the moral sublime with the sublime in nature which makes the great interest of the Peninsula of Sinai. Beyond all the stupendous altitudes of the mountains, beyond the Alpine heights and fathomless abysses, in power to stir the soul with awe, is the human history that has been enacted amid these great forms of nature. Serbal is clothed with such associations as with a garment. Long before the Exodus of the Israelites—long before Moses fed the flocks of Jethro by Mount Horeb—Serbal was an object of patriotic and superstitious veneration, the centre of a nation and the centre of a religion. Here were lighted fires to give warning to the tribes of the Peninsula, as fires were lighted on

Monte Cavo near Rome, as signals to the tribes of Latium. The Peninsula then was doubtless far more populous than now, many tribes dwelling in yonder valleys, within full view of this mountain height, so that when the beacon-fire was lighted here in the darkness of night, it shone in thousands of eyes which glared fiercely at the sign of battle. Nor was it patriotism alone which fired those warriors of the desert. Serbal, as its name imports—the palm-grove of Baal*—was a mountain devoted to that idolatrous service; it was the highest of all the "high places" set apart for that cruel and bloody worship. Here the priests of Baal erected their altars. On the top is still a rude cairn of stones, which may have stood here from the remotest times. This may have been one of their altars, which smoked with human sacrifices. Who could believe, when standing on such a spot, amid such scenes, so grand and yet so still and peaceful, that man could thus defile the noblest works of God; how, unawed by such grandeur, he was capable of deeds that thrill us with horror—deeds of such cruelty and crime! When I reached the top, I threw myself down upon a shelf of rock, in which there was a slight indentation, a hollow such as is sometimes worn by the action of water, which seemed as if made on purpose to receive the head of a poor pilgrim. This I took for a pillow, and here, stretched at full length, gave one long,

* The late Professor Palmer, who was at once master of Arabic and an indefatigable explorer in the Peninsula of Sinai, derived the name from another Arabic word, *sirbal*, signifying a shirt or coat-of-mail, which might have been suggested by the appearance of the mountain in a storm, when the floods descended on its dome-like head, and poured in innumerable silver streams down its rocky sides. Whether that be the true etymology of the name or not, the image it presents is very striking and beautiful.

steady gaze up into the blue sky. Hard indeed was it to realize that this very rock had borne up the bloody altars of Baal, and that these tranquil heavens had heard the shrieks of human victims. The very memory of such things still brings a shadow over the scene, like the shadows of the clouds that were at that moment sailing across the heavens above us. Well was it that Moses invaded these mountains and valleys, to extirpate not indeed such a race, but such a religion. The descendants of the Baal-worshippers are here still, but their worship, like the worship of Moloch, has perished forever.

As to the question whether Serbal or Sinai were the Mount of the Law, I am not so rash as to enter into a controversy in which both explorers and interpreters differ so widely. Dean Stanley states at once the advantage of Serbal and the objection to it, when he says that it would be impossible to find a more commanding height for *giving* the law, were there only a plain or valley below the Mount for *receiving* it. This circumstance has great weight, and yet I cannot think it decisive: for it assumes what it is by no means necessary to suppose, that all the Israelites stood together in a compact mass. Certainly there is no broad plain under Serbal, like that of Er Rahah under Sinai. Rephidim is comparatively but a mountain pass, to which Dr. Post returned after we had entered Wady Feiran, to measure it with a careful eye. He found it but a mile long and a third of a mile wide—a space ample for the battle with the Amalekites, for Joshua "chose out" his men, and they might have been only a few thousands, but quite inadequate to contain the two millions of people supposed to have been present at the giving of the Law. But why must we take it for granted that all stood in one vast plain, in ranks and battalions, like an army? There are half a dozen wadies from which they might see the top of

Serbal. They may have been scattered over a space many miles square, filling up the depths of the valleys and overflowing the tops of the hills. The sides of the mountains may have been black with the dense masses; and away yonder, on the shore of the Red Sea, is a sandy beach or plain, where there is space enough not only for the congregation of Israel, but we might almost say for the army of the dead if they were to rise up as at the Day of Judgment. All were within sight and hearing of the awful Mount. All might have seen the lightnings from the cloud, and heard the thunderings and "the voice of the trumpet sounding long and waxing louder and louder." So it *might* have been. How it *was*, we can perhaps judge better after we have ascended the cliffs of Sinai.

CHAPTER VIII.

COMING TO THE FOOT OF SINAI.

That ascent of Serbal nearly finished me. It took about as long to descend as to ascend, and the descent was hardly less fatiguing. The next morning I awoke with not quite the elation I had the day before, but rather feeling as if I had been beaten from head to foot; as if, forsooth, one of the old monks, who had been laid to rest a thousand years ago, enraged to have his sleep disturbed, had crawled out of his cell and crept down the mountain side to administer to an intruder the discipline of flagellation. However, I "picked myself up" and began to "pull myself together," and found that there was something of me left, and none the worse for a little rough experience. I find generally that what costs nothing is worth nothing; and so, if this mountain climb had cost a good deal, it was worth it all in visions and memories which it left behind, which can hardly fade as long as mind and memory endure. Amid the lighter impressions of the scene (as a contrast and relief to those which were more grand and sombre), there was a glimpse of our Arab companions which was not unpleasing. When we first looked down from the top of Serbal, it seemed as if we were looking into the burnt-out crater of a volcano, where all animate existence was extinguished. But it was not utterly destitute of life. With a spy-glass, one could detect the signs of human habitation. In the foreground was the camp which we had left at daylight in the morning, and

sprinkled here and there among the palms of the Wady Feiran were the tents of Arabs. Turning to points still farther away, to the very ends of the wadies, one could see little black patches in the yellow sand, which we had learned to recognize as Arab villages. Strictly speaking, the Arab has no village ; he is a nomad, whose only house is a tent, who camps wherever he can find a stream of water, or a little pasturage for his camels, and when that is gone, "folds his tent and silently steals away." How can human beings live in such frightful solitudes? "Why do you not leave this desolate region," said Dr. Post to one of our guides, "and go to Suez or Cairo, where you can find the companionship of men?" "Oh, no," said the Arab, "we cannot leave our mountains and valleys." "And do you really love them?" "Oh, yes," he answered with all the fervor of a Swiss mountaineer in exile, sighing for the cowbells of the Ranz des Vaches. The Doctor was standing on the topmost rock of Serbal, with his spy-glass in hand, following the winding wadies as they swept round and round the base of the mountains. The guide was watching his movements, and observing the instrument pointed in a certain direction, he followed it with eager curiosity. Noticing the expression of his countenance, the Doctor put the glass to his eyes, pointing it to the valley. A moment passed, and a smile stole over the swarthy face of the Bedawee—an expression of wonder and surprise and pleasure. He had recognized the village of his people. There were the little flocks of black goats dotting the hill-side. He saw the tents of his tribe, and the children sporting in the sand :

"There were his young barbarians all at play."

What wonder that he loved the spot? Poor and wretched as it was, it was his home, and he would not part from it for all the delights of civilization.

But it is not only the feeling of home, but the feeling of liberty, that attaches the Arab to his mountains and deserts. He loves the freedom of the wilderness, which is more to him than soft raiment and kings' houses. From long wandering there is a restlessness in his very blood which cannot be tamed. "Every kind of beasts is tamed, and hath been tamed, of mankind": man himself alone remains untamable. One might as well think of taming the wildest Camanches as the Bedaween. They are an untamable race. True children of Ishmael, they have roamed these deserts three thousand years untouched by civilization. I have sometimes amused myself by thinking what would be the result of an experiment to civilize a Bedawee. If he were to be taken to Paris, to be dressed in European costume, and made in his exterior like a man of the gay world, and taught all the luxuries and the vices of civilization, yet in his moments of pleasure there would creep over his face the expression of melancholy which seems to belong to the Oriental races, and at the first moment he would escape from his golden chains, from a life which was a bondage and slavery, and fly to his desert, to his tent and his camel.

With such memories and musings, we began our next morning's march. When we turned our backs on the Oasis of Wady Feiran, it was like leaving home. How soon the traveller on the desert gets a feeling of home for a spot where he has camped by the brookside and under the trees, where peace has come to him as he sat before his tent door in the cool of the day, when the evening wind gently stirred the leaves of the palms over his head. Three days before, this oasis was as utterly unknown to us as if it were a valley among the mountains of Central Asia. Now it had become dear by that Sabbath in the wilderness, by the ascent of Serbal, and even by our faintness

and weariness, for it is the spots in our earthly pilgrimage where we have been faint and weary which linger longest in the memory and the heart. To be sure, we were foot-sore as we rose up for the duties of the day, but our spirits were light if our limbs were heavy. Our way led along the bed of the little stream, which was overhung by palms. Nowhere have we seen so many palms since we entered the desert, and they are not like the palms of Egypt, naked trunks, with but a tuft of leaves at the top, but are feathered from the ground, and thus spread out their foliage in all the wildness and beauty of nature. No wonder this water-course is a great attraction for the Bedaween, who gather here with their flocks and herds. Up to this time we had seen scarcely a living animal on the desert, except the camels and the little black goats, which furnish the Arab with milk, and with haircloth for his cloaks and his tents. But once to-day we saw several sheep, and perhaps half a dozen little donkeys! Really, after hearing for so many days only the grunting of camels, it was some relief to hear the good honest bray of an ass. Twice we passed through narrow gates in the rocks, which seemed as if caused by a rush of waters, and in which Dr. Post found proof that these wadies were formerly the beds of lakes, which had broken through these gates and thus been drained off to the sea. Storms still sweep through them at times with tremendous fury. In 1867 an English traveller witnessed one of these in the Wady Feiran, when the water rose so rapidly that he had to flee to the hills for his life, as the whole valley, three hundred yards wide, became the bed of a river eight to ten feet deep, that swept along like an Alpine torrent.

As we advanced, the wady grew wider, and broadened out into a kind of upland valley, while the hills sank lower. Weary as we were, we made a long march, for the cam-

els had rested two days, and now strode forward with quick steps. But though we had a rest under a cliff at noon, we were very, very tired ere the day was done. It was a pity that we were so, for we camped in a spot where one would wish to have all his senses at command, to take in the fullest enjoyment. We had come through a wady that was one of the longest and widest in the Peninsula, and camped at the very end, from which, looking back, we had such a view of Serbal as it was worth travelling many days to see, his five columns seeming like the very portals of the Celestial City as they stood up clear against the western sky. But I was too weary to enjoy the sight even of the gates of the New Jerusalem, and no sooner were our tents pitched and our camp-beds spread than I threw myself down and fell asleep. Dr. Post, in a private letter written months afterward, alludes, among the experiences on the desert which he so vividly remembers, to "our fatigues and sickness and perils." These are things that we do not often speak of. But now that it is all over, I think I can say that that night he was in grave anxiety. I saw it in his face as he watched the symptoms with a fear which he afterwards confessed, though he did not dare then to express, that the morning would find in the tent a patient with a raging fever. His watchfulness and skill checked it. When morning came, I was still very weak and feverish, but not for a moment did I think of remaining in camp. On the desert, sick or well, one must press on. It is death to stop long, although it may seem like death to move. And as we were within half a day's march of Sinai, it was worth rising up even from a sick bed to make a last effort.

We were now to cross a rugged pass, which leads over into the broad valley or plain that slopes to the foot of Mount Sinai. It is fitly called the Pass of the Winds,

since it seems as if all the elements—not only winds, but floods and storms, and tempest in every form, with thunder and lightning—had been let loose to work the wildest ruin and confusion. It is narrow and steep, and so piled with rocks that it is quite impassable for baggage-camels, which have to be sent round another way, that is longer by some hours' march. Our camels had quite enough to do to carry us. Slowly and wearily did they struggle upward. As it was impossible for two to keep side by side, we straggled on one after the other, separate and silent. My spirits were such as might have been expected from a sick man, till after two or three hours we rose to the summit of the pass, when I heard behind me the voice of the dragoman shouting "Jebel Mousa!" That cry cured me in an instant. If it did not drive away the fever, it made me forget it. Instantly the tears rushed into my eyes, and all personal feeling was lost in one overpowering thought: There was the Mount of Moses, the Mount of God! On that domed summit the Almighty had descended in fire to give His law to men.

As we picked our way down the rocky pass, there opened before us, not a narrow mountain gorge, nor even a somewhat spacious wady, but a plain over two miles long and half a mile wide, which was enclosed by hills, and thus formed a natural amphitheatre. It was not level, but slightly descending, like the floor of some grand auditorium, so that all who stood upon it might be in full sight and hearing of a vision and a voice that were in the very focus of this vast circumference. Every eye could be fixed upon that awful Mount. Such an arena, a hundred times more spacious than the Coliseum at Rome, seems as if prepared for a great assembly and a great occasion. Never was there a spot more fitted for a scene so august. No sooner does one enter it than he feels that it must have

been intended for the camp of Israel, and for the hearing of the Law. The impression grows as we advance toward the foot of the Mount, for at each step we pass over the very ground where Israel stood. When my dear and honored friend, President Hitchcock of New York, with Professor Park of Andover, and Henry B. Smith of blessed memory, were here a few years since, they camped the night before reaching Sinai at a distance, but in full view of the summit, and that evening there came up a terrific storm, in which the lightnings and the thunderings vividly recalled the scene in which the Law was given. We had no such sight, neither when we stood afar off, nor yet when we drew nigh unto the Mount where God was. The sky was without a cloud, as if every token of wrath had passed away, and all was peace.

But neither sunshine nor storm could make us abide in tents, if there was a sign of a more stable habitation, and that we were now approaching in the Convent of St. Catherine. For the last hour our eyes had been divided between the mighty cliffs above us, which seemed like the battlements of the city whose walls are "great and high," and a spot of green at the base of the mountain. The Convent does not stand, as I had supposed, high up on the side of Mount Sinai (I had imagined it perched on a cliff overlooking the valley below), but at its foot, and not in front, but on one side between two mountains, where indeed it fills up almost the whole pass, leaving but a few rods more than room for the camel-path that winds around it. In this confined space the monks have made a paradise in the wilderness. As we approached, we were delighted with the sight of blossoming trees. To be sure, there were a few funereal-looking cypresses, which seemed in harmony with the general desolation. But mingled with this dark foliage were trees

in full bloom—the almond, the cherry, the peach, and the apricot, the olive, and the orange, with a single fine specimen of the carob tree, which yields "the husks that the swine did eat," and which (though its pods be destined to such an ignoble use) is really quite a majestic tree. Around and among these trees were extensive gardens, carefully cultivated, and yielding fresh vegetables in abundance. Was there ever a sight more grateful to the eyes of weary travellers, after a long journey on the desert?

The Convent is a range of buildings grouped in a quadrangle of such extent that hundreds of pilgrims could easily be lodged within its numerous courts, and which thus suggests the idea of a huge Eastern caravanserai, and at the same time of a fortress, for its very construction tells plainly that it was built long ago, in times when it was a post of danger, to be held against attack. Its walls are like ramparts, with port-holes and watch-towers, and a strong gateway like one that opens into a fort. Indeed not fifty years ago strangers who found shelter here were not admitted by an open gate, but were drawn up in a basket, and swung into a window in the third or fourth story. The great rope still hangs outside in token of its former use, and we afterwards amused ourselves by putting it round us and taking a seat as in a swing, while the monks above lifted us from the ground. But this danger has passed away of later years, since Russia has taken the Convent under its protection; and now it has an arched portal, through which a party mounted on camels can ride into an outer court. Into this we rode, and dismounted in front of the heavier and stronger wall of the fortress. Entrance farther is obtained only by a letter from the Greek patriarch at Cairo, which we had brought with us, and sent by an attendant to the Prior of the Convent.

Presently one of the brethren appeared and bade us

welcome. It was the Econome, who receives pilgrims and guests. We find that the Convent has a sort of double head, spiritual and temporal (like the Tycoon and the Mikado of Japan)—a Prior, who is the spiritual head, and an Econome (Ækonomos), who is the business manager. It was with the latter we had most to do. The other kept himself hid in the recesses of the Convent, with his mind fixed on heavenly things, in the dim religious light appropriate to one of his sacred character; while the Econome was by no means

> " . . . Too wise or good
> For human nature's daily food,"

but a jolly monk, who could talk and laugh with the most worldly visitor. As he led our way into the interior, we were again reminded that we were entering a fortress. The walls are seven feet thick, quite sufficient to resist any attack but that of modern artillery. The postern is just high enough for a man's head, and the passage so narrow that it admits but one person at a time. The door which shuts this entrance is like the door of a prison, of massive oak, barred and spiked with iron. Entering here a few feet, and turning sidewise, we were led along one passage after another into an open court, then down-stairs and up-stairs, by a path so winding that it was several days before I could find my way, into the large room of the Convent, where strangers are received. Here several of the brethren soon appeared with pleasant salutations, and notably the Archimandrite of Jerusalem, who has been some months at the Convent, and who, to my great joy, addressed me in French, so that I was immediately in communication with him. The others I had to turn over entirely to Dr. Post, as they spoke little but Arabic. He is a large man, of fine presence and open countenance, who has seen a good deal of the world, having lived five years

at Constantinople and thirty at Jerusalem. We were seated on the divan with our hosts, when a monk entered bearing a tray on which were the tiny cups of coffee always used in the East. After partaking of refreshments, we asked for lodgings, which were not so easily obtained, as the rooms set apart for that purpose were occupied by ecclesiastical visitors. Of late years travellers have more generally adopted the plan of camping outside the Convent. The monks offered us a place in the garden, where we could pitch our tents under the blossoming almond-trees. But no; I wished to be not outside, but "within the gates," and gently urged the matter, till the Archimandrite said he would see what they could do, and after sending to inquire, in a few minutes conducted us to a couple of rooms on the third story, at the end of a long corridor. My room was in the extreme angle, at the farthest corner, where, as I looked out of the window, it seemed as if I were perched up in the signal-tower of a fortress. The wall even on this story was three feet thick, and the window was secured by heavy iron bars—a precaution which was necessary in the grim old days, to keep an enemy from getting in, if not a prisoner from getting out. But no matter: though it had been barred like a dungeon, the window had a pretty lookout up the valley, and through it came a cool, refreshing breeze. The door opened on the corridor, which looked down upon the whole interior of the Convent. Our dragoman and cook found quarters in the court below, and served our meals on this corridor, and took the whole care of our rooms. A few feet from my door a cannon peered out of a port-hole (there were several small pieces of artillery along the corridor and mounted on the walls), and in my room was a picture of the Virgin, before which, as a shrine, a lamp was kept burning, so that I was protected both by earthly and heav-

enly powers. The room was plain enough for any monk, but it was clean (the walls had been whitewashed); and though the floor was of brick, yet the rug which the dragoman spread over it made it soft to the feet. At least it was a place of rest, which was sorely needed after the fatigues of our long marches. I was very much exhausted, in spite of the excitement; indeed the excitement itself was exhausting. And so with a gratitude that cannot be expressed, we lay down that night and slept at the foot of Horeb, the Mount of God.

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE TOP OF MOUNT SINAI.

When we reached the Convent, I felt that I was "dead," and should leave my bones with those of the Israelites that fell in the wilderness; but the next morning, when the sun crept in through the iron bars of my window, I awoke with a dreamy sort of feeling, as half in doubt where or what I was. A Convent is a ghostly place, and one may easily get a feeling as if he were a pale wanderer in the shades below. Several times in the night I had been awaked by a deep sepulchral sound. It was not the Convent bell, but a stroke on a heavy bar of iron, which called the monks to prayer. This added to the strangeness of the place, so that whether I was in the body or out of the body, I could not tell. But daylight scatters the ghosts that have come about us in the night, so that when the sun was fully risen, I began slowly to come back to this world; and as I looked out of the window, and saw the camels lying in the yard of the Convent, I realized at last that we were at the foot of Mount Sinai, whose top we hoped to reach that very day.

It was nearly nine o'clock when we mounted and filed slowly out of the arched gateway. Our path led round to the rear of the Convent. At the end of the valley is a conical hill, on which it is said that Mahomet once had an audience with God; for the Moslems will have it that their Prophet was in no wise inferior to Moses. It is quite possible that the tradition is true, that in his youth, when a mere camel-driver, he wandered among these hills, and

perhaps caught from the legends of Moses the idea of making the daring attempt to assume the part of a Prophet of God; and that again he came after he had promulgated his visions, and met with success beyond his utmost belief, when he proudly assumed the role of protector. It gives one an idea of the age of the Convent, to remember that it is older than Mahomet: it was founded by the Emperor Justinian in the year 555, so that it has been standing more than thirteen centuries! The early monks felt the need of making friends with the new power which had just risen in Arabia, and was attacking and destroying on every side, and so sought and received from Mahomet a pledge of his protection. He could not write, but dipping his broad hand in ink (it might have been in blood, for the color is red), gave the imprint of his open palm. That was a signature which could not be mistaken. A copy of this bloody hand is hung up in the room in which I am now writing; the original is said to be in Constantinople, though I can hear of no one who has seen it; but tradition supports the fact of its existence; and to this pledge of the Prophet the monks have often appealed, and it is due to it that the Convent has not been long since destroyed.

Continuing our course, we began to wind round the base of the mountain. Now it seemed as if we were pilgrims to the heavenly Jerusalem. It did not need that a monk should be sitting by the wayside, as in the old time, to ask "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or who shall stand in His holy place?" and after hearing our confession, to grant us absolution: for were we not beginning, where Bunyan's Pilgrim began, at the foot of Mount Sinai, a journey which was to end only at the Celestial City? Though our progress was slow, yet we were "stepping heavenward." There was something like one's Christian experience even in this indirect approach.

It was as if we could not face the Mount, and go up straight into the cloud, but must approach by a way more gentle and winding, but in which, though we seemed to be only going round and round, we were all the while climbing higher and higher. Gradual as was the ascent, yet we knew that we were slowly mounting: for as we looked backward now and then, we perceived by comparison with surrounding heights that we had reached a greater elevation. As they sank lower, we knew that we had risen higher. A camel's back is a good perch from which to look down into deep mountain valleys. But there came a point where we must leave the camels, and continue on foot. The ascent, however, is not to be compared to that of Serbal; indeed it is not at all difficult, for pious hands have piled up stones as rude steps for the feet of pilgrims, so that we go up slowly, but steadily and easily, to the top of the Mount. Riding and walking, the whole time of the ascent from the Convent was less than three hours, while that of Serbal was six.

We were now on Jebel Mousa, the summit which ancient tradition assigns as the place of the giving of the Law; although, as we shall see, later explorers incline to another peak of the same mountain which more directly overlooks the plain of Er Rahah. Jebel Mousa is over six hundred feet higher than Serbal, though in appearance it is less imposing. But it is a magnificent dome of rock. As I crept to the verge of the cliff, the dragoman grasped me by the arm and drew me back, lest I should be made giddy by the fearful height: for one slip there, and I should be dashed a thousand feet below. The view also is of great extent, and very similar in its general character to that from Serbal, with the same vast stretch over the Peninsula—the same waters of the Red Sea encompassing the same wilderness of mountains. But the objec-

tion to Serbal being the Mount of the Law applies equally to Jebel Mousa, that there is no broad plain under it in which the whole congregation of Israel might stand. Wadies enough there are in sight, but scattered here and there in a way to raise a doubt as to its being the chosen summit, especially when one finds another point near at hand where all the conditions are supplied. But for the hour or two that we rest here, we may give ourselves up to the sacred associations of a spot which has been consecrated by the reverent faith of many generations. Here Moslem and Christian can join in worship, for on the top stand side by side a small Greek chapel and a little mosque. We found nothing to excite our devotion in the tinselled Greek chapel, but sat reverently without on the rock while Dr. Post read out of his Arabic Bible the Ten Commandments. But the dragoman of the other American party, who was a devout Moslem, entered the mosque, and with his face turned towards Mecca, bowed himself in low prostrations, swinging his head from side to side, and calling upon Allah. The Moslems have great reverence for the Hebrew Lawgiver, whom they always speak of as "our Lord Moses," and whose name they like to associate with that of Mahomet as the two Prophets of God, and make pilgrimages to Jebel Mousa, where they show in the rock the footprint of Mahomet's camel! If any be surprised that there should be only *one* footprint, yet be not incredulous, O gentle reader, for this is easily explained when you consider that the sacred camel only touched the top of the rock as he flew through the air, bearing the prophet from Mecca to Jerusalem! Moslem traditions vary on this point, some affirming that the camel stood with legs outstretched, one foot in Cairo, one in Damascus, one in Mecca, and one on Sinai, from which he was carried up into heaven, with his rider on his

back, by the Angel Gabriel! Of two miracles, the true believer will always choose the greater. Some of the Christian traditions which have gathered about Mount Sinai are hardly more worthy of credit. The attempt of the monks to localize every event has led to many designations which are quite absurd. Still we cannot repress some degree of feeling as we creep into a cleft of the rock in which it is said Moses hid himself when the Lord passed by; or into the reputed cave in which Elijah hid himself when he fled from the wrath of Jezebel, after he had slain the prophets of Baal.

We now descended Jebel Mousa to a valley midway between this and the other peak which is now more commonly believed to have been the Mount of the Law. This valley contains a remarkable willow, which gives to the mountain before us the name of Ras Sufsafeh, the Mountain of the Willow, and well entitled it is to such an honor, if what the monks tell us be true, that it is the very one from which Moses cut the rod with which he smote the rock and made the waters flow! How they know that the tree was a willow, it is for them to say, or how it should possess such remarkable vitality that it has been preserved to this day. It looks as if it might be fifty years old! Here in a pass between rocks, under a huge granite boulder, is a spring of water which the Arabs say never fails. It was very grateful in the heat of the day, especially as we found snow in a cleft of the rocks, which, added to the natural coldness of the spring, gave us ice water on Mount Sinai. Here we rested for some minutes, bathing our foreheads, before we began another mountain climb.

At the willow Dr. Post left me for an hour, to make a different ascent. Near to Ras Sufsafeh is a second peak which commands the same sight of Er Rahah in front, and

which, he thought, might also take in a wady on the East, making the whole view more extensive. To determine this point, he proposed to ascend it. But the monk from the Convent, who accompanied us as a more learned conductor than the Arab guides, at once frowned on the suggestion by declaring it "impossible," that it "had never been done," that, in short, it was a spot "where no human foot had ever trod"! It did look very perpendicular, but Dr. Post was not quite willing to accept the assurance that it was inaccessible. Spying it round from different points, he thought he discovered on the top a small cairn of stones, a sort of rude altar, a proof that human feet had been there and human hands also; and while the grizzled old monk looked aghast at the presumption and almost impiety of attempting to do what no one had done before, he set forward, telling one of the Arab guides to follow him. He is a capital mountaineer, springing from rock to rock like a chamois, and climbing wherever a goat could set its foot, and in half an hour he shouted to me from the very pinnacle of the peak which "no human foot had ever trod."

Meanwhile, with two other guides I had been slowly making my way up the rocky steep of Ras Sufsafeh. It is a pretty hard climb, but it seemed light compared with that of Serbal, and in an hour we stood on the very top. This is the peak from which Dr. Robinson, after careful exploration of all the points of the Sinai group, believed that the Law was given; and when I reached the summit and looked down into the plain of Er Rahah, I saw at once the reasons which led him to this conclusion, for here all the conditions are met, and I no longer doubted that I was standing on the holy mount. On the very front and forehead of the cliff, stands a tremendous boulder, which seems as if it might have been the "pulpit" of the great Lawgiver. To this I climbed, or rather was dragged up by the

Arabs, and here looked down on a spot which had witnessed the most august event in human history, except that which took place on Calvary. I now sent the guides away to a little distance, though not beyond call, for there are moments when one must be alone to get the full force of sacred associations, and here where Moses talked with God, one feels that he is face to face with his Maker. When left quite alone in the awful solitude of the mountain, one feels that he is on holy ground. I did not, after the Oriental custom, take off my shoes from my feet, but after the Western sign of reverence, uncovered my head, as when one enters a cathedral where he must speak in a whispered voice, and move about with noiseless steps.

Coming to such a height of vision, one feels as if he had come to a point in his own life, and a personal feeling mingles with that inspired by the scene, so that one flows into the other. As I looked down from the top of Sinai, I saw not only the deep passes winding away into the mountains, I saw the winding course of a lifetime that had at last brought me to this spot; and how could one who felt that he was but a pilgrim, tarrying not even for a night, but only for an hour, help breathing a prayer to Him who of old led His people across these deserts and through these mountains, that He would guide his wandering steps aright! And then somehow there came into my heart and to my lips the words of the Twenty-third Psalm, and standing there alone with uncovered head, I found myself repeating the blessed assurance, in the strength of which I shall go all my days: "The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me."

The spell was broken by shouts down the mountain, and presently Dr. Post appeared with the other American party, and all together we studied the features of the mountain and the plain as related to each other. Looking over the edge of the cliff, we could see how perfectly it answered to the description of "the mount that might be touched," for the plain came up to its very base, and at the same time there were low-lying mounds at the foot, which seemed to mark where bounds had been set against too near an approach. As to the extent of open space, wide as it was, Dr. Post reported that the other peak which he had climbed commanded a view still wider; that, while it was in the very axis of the plain of Er Rahah, it took in also a wady on the other side, which furnished standing ground for perhaps half a million more. Hence he inclines to the opinion that *this* was the peak which Dr. Robinson ascended, as it answers more exactly to the description he has given. But after all, the question whether it was this or that, does not seem very important, for the whole group is comprised under the general name of Sinai, and the Divine manifestation may have included them all. "The mountain was altogether on a smoke," and to the multitude that looked upward it may have seemed as if all were wrapped in the volume of dense, rolling cloud. Those who have witnessed an eruption of Vesuvius from the Bay of Naples, remember that at times great masses of smoke roll down the mountain side, and then clear away, and flames shoot up to a vast height, reddening the sky, while at the same time they are reflected in the faces of a multitude of spectators white with terror, as if the Dies Iræ had come and the very heavens were on fire. If amid this scene, the grandest and most awful that Nature ever presents, a voice were heard issuing out of the cloud and rolling down the breast of the

mountain, we might form some faint conception of the mingled majesty and terror of the sight when the Lord descended upon Sinai. From the top we observed what we had noticed in the plain, that the ground is lowest nearest the mountain, and that it rises as it recedes, like the seats of an amphitheatre, so that all converge to one point, which is the centre of the scene. At the farther end of the plain, the surface is more broken, rising and falling in gentle undulations, so that if any fled terror-stricken from the base of the mount, they could still behold it afar off, from the distant slopes, while they heard the mighty voice that swept across the plain, and reverberated like thunder in the farthest recesses of the mountains. No wonder that those who stood trembling at the sight said to Moses, "Speak thou with us and we will hear, but let not God speak with us lest we die."

But what need, asks the sneerer at Moses, of such grand "pyrotechnics" to attend the giving of the Law? Why should "the heavens be on fire" except it were to illuminate a world? What need of all this array of clouds and storms, of lightnings and thunderings? Was there a king to be crowned? Not one of the Pharaohs ever saw such a sight on the banks of the Nile. But here there was neither king nor crown, nor any of the signs of royalty. Only a law was to be proclaimed; and that not a complete system of legislation, but only Ten Commandments, expressed in few words. There is an apparent want of harmony in such magnificent preparations to usher in such a feeble conclusion. And yet somehow this Law, so small in volume, has lived for thousands of years, and promises to live to the end of time. Standing here on the rocky height where it was given, we cannot forbear some reflections on the peculiar features of a Law thus proclaimed, which had such an origin, and was to have such a history.

The Ten Commandments are commonly divided into two Tables—that which concerns the worship of God, and that which treats of the relations of men to each other. First and foremost is the idea of God. That is central and supreme, standing in the very front of the law, as it does of the Bible. The first sentence of the Bible is "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Author of all things, He is the beginning and the end of all law, as of all religion. The first command of the Decalogue announces the principle of Monotheism—that there is only one living and true God, who is the Creator of all things, and the only object of human worship. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." How short the sentence, and yet it rules the world! This morning, as the sun came from the East, it touched the gilded domes, not only of Cairo and Damascus and Constantinople, but of ten thousand mosques all over the Mohammedan world, and from all their minarets the voice of the muezzin cried "God is God: there is no God but God"—words which were but the faint, far-off echo of those spoken on Sinai two thousand years before Mahomet was born. What meaning did the word God convey to the mind of the Hebrew who had come out of Egypt? It did not recall the legend of Isis or Osiris. It did not present for his worship the vague incarnation of a principle of good or evil, but a living Being, a Divine Guardian and Protector. Well might that sacred name stand in the very front of a law of which God was the beginning and the end.

The second command is aimed at the idolatrous worship which the Israelites had learned in Egypt, and to which they clung with such strange infatuation. The third, "Not to take the name of God in vain," inculcated that reverence in word which must accompany obedience in act. The fourth has this peculiarity, that whereas a

command is usually an ordinance of labor, this is an ordinance of *rest*. "Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; *in it thou shalt not do any work.*" For one day in seven the perpetual grind of life ceases; the wheels stand still; the laborer lays down his burden. This is a blessing disguised as a command, a Divine benediction on an overburdened world.

Next to the reverence which we owe to our Maker, is that which we owe to those who are, in another sense, the authors of our being, and so to the command to worship God follows "Honor thy father and thy mother." This consecrates the family relation. "Honor" includes love, reverence, and obedience—a trinity of virtues, out of which flowers and blossoms all that is most beautiful in human character.

And now follow five commands regulating the relations of men to each other, which are the most remarkable summary of law in all the annals of legislation—remarkable because they compact into few words the sum of all wisdom, as approved by the universal experience of mankind. For example, in these two commands, "Thou shalt not kill" and "Thou shalt not steal," each of which is stated in four words, and four words of one syllable, is contained the seed-principle of protection to person and property, which is the germ of all civilized society. These precepts, so brief—we might almost say, so minute in their brevity and condensation—comprehend all the laws that were ever enacted to guard the lives and the possessions of men.

"Thou shalt not commit adultery"—thou shalt not sin thyself, nor tempt others to sin. This guards, as a holy shrine, the virtue of man and woman; it watches like an angel over the purity of domestic life, and drives away the

foul fiends of passion and lust, and fills the dwelling with that sweet, pure, trustful love, which makes home the type of heaven.

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." This guards character and reputation against evil eyes as well as slanderous tongues; against the looks as well as words by which one casts a shade on another's good name, which is dearer to him than life.

"Thou shalt not covet"—not only shalt thou not rob or defraud thy neighbor, thou shalt not even desire that which is his—it is the fruit of his labor, leave it to his enjoyment, and be content with thine own. This protects your neighbor, and by its reverse action protects you also, not only from violence and wrong, but from the least approach of covetous desire. If this one command were obeyed, what contentment and what peace would it bring into every home and into every heart.

That is all. There are but ten commandments, no less and no more. These last five seem almost too brief and too simple. But do they not cover the whole field? What crime is there against person or property, against a man's life or his honor, against his virtue or his good name, which they do not forbid? Tell us, legislator or philosopher, if you have anything to add to this brief code? What interest of man does it leave unprotected?

The more we reflect upon it, the more the wonder grows. The framework of laws in a nation is the work of ages, but here the whole is compressed into a space so small that it could be written on a man's hand. Different nations have obtained their rights at the price of great sacrifices—rights which are summed up in certain great charters, such as the Magna Charta of England and the Declaration of Independence of America. As these contain the principles of Universal Liberty, so does this sec-

ond table of the law contain the principles of Universal Justice. If it were obeyed, there is not an act of injustice which could find a place among men. Is it then too much to say that the Ten Commandments are the acorn which contains the oak of civilization? Who can measure the germinating power of a great principle of justice—how it multiplies itself in its application to different countries and races, adapting itself to all times and climes, to all the relations of men as they may change to the end of the world? It is the handful of corn in the top of the mountain, but the fruit thereof shakes like Lebanon. To a law so beneficent, is it possible to ascribe an origin too high or too sacred? Law in its highest form has always been regarded as the emanation of Divinity. "Law," says Hooker, "has her seat in the bosom of God, and her voice is the harmony of the world. All things in heaven and earth do her homage—the very least as feeling her care, and the greatest as not exempted from her power." There is a natural fitness in a Law so Divine being delivered from the skies. The greatest of living English poets, when he would personify Liberty, beholds her "on the heights":

"Of old sat Freedom on the heights,
The thunders breaking at her feet;
Above her shook the starry lights:
She heard the torrents meet.

"Within her place she did rejoice,
Self-gathered in her prophet mind;
But fragments of her mighty voice
Came rolling on the wind."

What is thus spoken of Liberty may be said of Law, that

Of old she sat upon the heights,
The thunders breaking at her feet:

Even more than Liberty does Law deserve to be thus lifted up in the sight of the nations, for it is a higher and a diviner thing. The Universe can exist without Liberty;

it cannot exist without Law; and if we might apply these majestic lines to the sacred image of Law enthroned on the cliffs of Sinai, we might say that from those "heights" not only do

> "Fragments of her mighty voice
> Come rolling on the wind,"

but that the full voice, loud and clear, speaks to all the kindreds of mankind.

Whence then had this man this wisdom? He was "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," but he did not find it there, for a part of his code is aimed directly at the idolatries which were universal in Egypt. Where then did he get his inspiration? This is for those who are fond of pointing out the Mistakes of Moses to answer. They seem not to reflect, that when they have exhausted their small stock of wit on the supernatural proofs of his Divine mission, (as when, for example, they suggest that he took advantage of a thunder storm, which came up while he was on the mountain, to work upon the fears and the credulity of the people!) and have thus disposed, as they imagine, of the miracles of Moses, they leave the great miracle untouched: it is the Law itself. They have explained the lightnings and the thunderings: let them explain the Law. That remains a great fact in history, harder and more unyielding than the granite dome of Mount Sinai itself. *Where did Moses get that Law?* Those who, while they disparage the Bible, are ready to do honor to all other religions, to their founders and their sacred books, would willingly ascribe it to Buddha, whose Five Commandments so nearly correspond to the Second Table of the Law. Nor would it daunt them in the least that it would oblige them to follow those Commandments of Buddha from India across the whole breadth of Asia; but unfortunately Moses lived and died more than eight hundred years be-

fore Buddha was born! The ingenuity of unbelief must devise some other explanation. It is enough for us, as we come down from the Mount, to accept reverently the assurance that the Law which Moses gave to the Hebrews was written with the finger of God on tables of stone.

Such thoughts, suggested by such sights, gave a sacred interest to the hours that we stood on Mount Sinai, and filled our minds with a strange wonder as we left that hoary summit. We sent back the camels, and came down by a more direct but more precipitous descent, through the Valley of Jethro, so called because half way down the mountain, under a projecting rock, is a perpetual spring which bears that name. To this point no doubt Moses often climbed when he watched the flocks of Jethro, and sat for hours beneath the shade of the rock beside the cooling spring, and perhaps found the same graceful ferns that grow there still. In the association of everything about Sinai with the great Hebrew Lawgiver, it is pleasant to know that nature remains unchanged. These granite cliffs do not wear away by time, or but slowly in the lapse of ages. So the fern still grows, and the water flows, and we may gather to-day from the dripping rocks the same delicate maiden's hair which Moses gathered for the daughter of Jethro more than three thousand years ago.

CHAPTER X.

THE HEBREW COMMONWEALTH FOUNDED ON RELIGION.

After we had made the ascent of Mount Sinai, we settled down for a few days to a quiet life in the Convent, dividing our time between excursions without and reading and writing within. One needs a little time to set his thoughts in order after such an experience. The ascent of Mount Sinai is an event in one's life, and the reflections it suggests do not pass away with the place and the hour. Standing on that height, one is at the very beginnings of history: there a religion was promulgated; there a state was born; and there a code of laws was given which has influenced the legislation of all after times. As we linger at the foot of the Mount, our thoughts run on along the line of that history which had its beginning here. Of course one great name fills our minds, as it fills all the spaces of these mountains. Believing that the world owes more to Moses than to any other character that appeared in history before the time of Christ, it seems the part of loyalty to recognize his influence in the work of human progress and civilization, and thus to vindicate his claim to the homage and the gratitude of mankind. To this we are the more inclined, as it is a fashion of the day to sneer at Moses. Those who would destroy the authority of the Bible, make it almost a first point to direct their attacks against one whose name stands in front of the Old Testament, as the name of One greater than Moses stands in front of the New. Even writers upon Law, who concede

to Moses a place with Solon and Lycurgus among the lawgivers of antiquity, yet sometimes qualify their praise by implying that Moses was great, and that his Law was great, by comparison with ancient barbarism rather than with modern civilization. It may therefore serve a useful purpose to devote a few pages to considering the character of his legislation, that we may judge whether it lies in the line of barbarism or of civilization. Is the Hebrew Law composed merely of the arbitrary decrees of one who ruled, like any Oriental monarch, with absolute authority, and whose decrees merely registered the impulses of his capricious will? or is it founded in principles of justice, which fit it, not for one age alone, but for all ages; not for the Hebrews only, but for mankind?

There is a very common reflection upon the Hebrew Lawgiver, which, though it does not call in question any particular law, is yet designed to vitiate and weaken the impression of the whole—that he was a stern and relentless ruler, who may indeed have understood the principles of justice, but whose justice was seldom tempered with mercy. This impression is derived partly at least from the summary way in which in several instances he dealt with rebellion. To this kind of argument there is one brief and sufficient answer: all bodies of men are acknowledged to have the right to resort to severe penalties when encompassed by extraordinary dangers. The children of Israel were in a position of great peril, and their safety depended on the wisdom and firmness of one man. Never had a ruler a more difficult task. Moses did not legislate for the ideal republic of Plato, a community of perfect beings, but for a people born in slavery, from which they had but just broken away, and that were in danger of becoming ungovernable. Here were two millions and a half, who had not even a settled place of abode. Had they been dwelling in towns and

cities, or scattered over the hillsides of Judea, the task of ruling them would have been easy. But they were a people without a country, and not yet even organized into a nation, but mustered in one vast camp, through which rebellion might spread in a day. Moses had to govern them by his single will. He had to do everything: to direct their marches, to order their battles, and even to provide for their subsistence; while all the time rose up around him, like the roaring of the sea, the factions and jealousies of the different tribes.

To preserve order among themselves, and to guard against hostile attacks, all the men capable of bearing arms were organized as a military body. They marched in armed array, and pitched their tents around the standards of their tribes. For the safety of this mighty host, Moses had to issue strict orders, such as all commanders publish to their armies. In every military code, the first requirement is subordination to the chief. Rebellion threatens the very existence of an army. Whoever, therefore, attempts to stir a whole camp to rage and mutiny, must expect to be given up to instant death. In this Moses only enforced the ordinary laws of war. In an age when we have seen men blown away from guns—as in the Indian Mutiny, for acts of mutiny and massacre, or by Wellington for the lesser offence of pillage—we need not be troubled to answer for undue severity in Moses in dealing with what threatened anarchy, and if unchecked, would bring inevitable destruction. He suppressed rebellion as Cromwell would have suppressed it: he not only put it down, but stamped it out, and such prompt severity was the truest humanity.

But it is not acts of military discipline that provoke the criticism of modern humanitarians, so much as those religious laws which prescribed the God whom the He-

brews should worship, and punished idolatry and blasphemy as the greatest of crimes. This brings up the whole question of religious laws. With our notions of liberty, any laws whatever in regard to man's faith or worship seem a violation of the inalienable rights of conscience. But here a ruler prescribes to his nation the Being to be worshipped, and enforces conformity by the most rigorous statutes. "There is no God but God," said Mahomet, echoing what Moses had said so many centuries before; and not Mahomet himself was more intolerant of disobedience or contempt of the Divine authority. Idolatry was put down by force of arms. This, it is said, transcends the proper sphere of human law: it exalts ceremonies into duties, and denounces as crimes acts which have no moral wrong. Thus it rewards without merit, and punishes without guilt. Was not then the Hebrew Law wanting in the first principle of justice—freedom to all religions?

Now it is quite absurd to suppose that any Israelite had conscientious scruples against this worship, or seriously doubted whether Jehovah or Baal, whose bloody sacrifices had been offered on Mount Serbal, were the true God. They had been rescued from slavery by a direct interposition of the Almighty. The sea had opened its waves for their passage; they had been led by an Almighty Deliverer; and it was His voice which they heard from the cliffs of Sinai.

But it was not merely because their Religion was *true*, and the *only* true worship, that they were required to accept it; but because also of the peculiar relation which its Divine Author had assumed towards the Hebrew state as its Founder and Protector. That relation was declared, not in the cold and stately formula, "There is no God but God," but in words which are warm and livin as with the

breath of the Almighty, "I am the Lord *thy* God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." In all their wanderings He was their Leader. The symbol of His presence went before them as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

By keeping in mind this peculiar relation of the Divine Ruler to the state, we may understand the whole constitution of the Hebrew Commonwealth. The government was not a monarchy, but a theocracy. They had no King but God: He was the only Lord. As such, no act of disobedience or disrespect to His authority, could be light or small. The most extreme instance of a punishment disproportioned to the offence, is that in which a man was stoned for gathering sticks on the Sabbath day! This may be said to be the pet case of the critics who sit in judgment upon Moses, and they do not fail to make the most of it: "What an exaggerated importance is here given to a petty offence, and how inexorable must have been the law which punished such a trifle with death!" And yet, strange to say, the story is told in perfect frankness and simplicity, with no attempt at concealment or disguise, as if the act needed any explanation or apology. Turning to the narrative, we find that this is a solitary instance—that it stands alone; there is not another like it in all the Jewish history. Wherefore it was probably attended with unknown aggravations. Acts trivial in themselves sometimes derive importance from the circumstances in which they are committed. This may have been done publicly and purposely, as an affront to the Divine Majesty; as an open defiance of Him who had ordained the Sabbath as a day of rest, to be kept sacred and inviolable; and so it may have been punished as a wanton contempt of authority. Trifling as it seemed, it was a violation of an express command lately given, and a wilful offence which could not be passed over.

Further, the unity of God was a centre of unity for the nation. The state was one because their God was one. The worship of Jehovah alone distinguished the Hebrews from all other people, and preserved their separate nationality. What bond of union could hold together millions of people pouring out of Egypt in wild and hurried flight, and scattering afar on the Arabian deserts? Not the ties of blood, nor even the instinct of self-preservation. Nothing but their common religion, which was one and indivisible. The maintenance of this was essential to their very existence. Once throw down their altars, and the whole nation would crumble to pieces. Admit other religions, and the bond which held together the Twelve Tribes was dissolved. How long could that union have lasted if the prophets of Baal had had the freedom of the camp, and been permitted to go from tribe to tribe, and from tent to tent, preaching the doctrine of human sacrifices? Hence Moses did not suffer them for an hour. False prophets were to be stoned to death.

We need not stop to defend the abstract justice of these laws. It is enough that every state has a right to consult for its own safety, and to proscribe or banish any class of men that are found to be dangerous. On this principle, many European governments have driven out the Jesuits, whom they found plotting against the peace of their realms. By the same rule of acting for the public safety, Moses had the right to rid his people of pestilent prophets and diviners. No good ever came of them. Often they have led princes to embark in disastrous wars, by promising victories in the name of their gods. In the last century the Turkish Sultan, putting faith in certain Moslem prophecies, plunged into a war with Russia, which nearly proved the ruin of his empire.*

* Michaelis, Vol. IV., p. 75.

Besides, the people whom Moses led were advancing into great dangers. All round them were pagan nations. Egypt was behind them, and Canaan before them. They had just left the most powerful kingdom on earth, where men prostrated themselves before beasts. They still had a lingering fondness for that hideous worship. On one occasion, when Moses was absent from the camp for forty days, on his return he found them singing and shouting round a golden calf, an image of the god Apis. Often they showed a fanatical frenzy for idolatry. Against all this Moses stood alone, and combated the popular fury. If he had no Divine authority to sustain him, to impose such laws on hostile millions showed a moral daring of which there is no example in history.

As the unity of God was the fundamental law of the state, idolatry of course was the first of crimes. This, therefore, was placed under the ban of absolute prohibition.* Any individual who sought to entice them away from their God, even though the nearest kindred, was to be stoned. If a whole city relapsed into idolatry, it was placed out of the pale of protection, and was to be utterly destroyed.†

Not only the false worship itself, but everything which could lead to it was forbidden. All the arts by which it was upheld—divination, sorcery, magic, witchcraft—were torn up root and branch.‡ Witches—those old sybils who decoyed men by their juggling arts—were not permitted to live.

Does this appear the extreme of harshness and intolerance? Perhaps it was rather a brave act of mercy. In every pagan country there are sorcerers and necromancers who claim to have power over the elements, or over life and death, and who impose on ignorant savages, often to

* Deut. xiii. 6-11. † Deut. xiii. 12-16. ‡ Deut. xviii. 9-12.

perpetrate acts of fiendish cruelty. Travellers in the interior of Africa tell us that the curse of the Dark Continent, greater perhaps than the slave trade itself, is witchcraft. If a man is taken ill, he is supposed to be bewitched, and he cannot recover until the person who has bewitched him is found and put to death. Here come in a class of medicine-men, or fetish-men, who claim to have the power of detecting by secret signs those who have bewitched the sick, and this pretended power they use to gratify their own malignity or revenge. M. du Chaillu once described to me the horrible scenes which he had witnessed in an African village, particularly the fate of a beautiful girl who ran to him shrieking in despair, and whom he tried to save, but in vain.

These fetish-men are really professional murderers, as much as the Thugs of India. If an African king were to become so far civilized as to get his eyes open to the horrible cruelty of these demons in human form, could he make a better use of his knowledge or of his power than to seize them as the most conspicuous examples of crime and its punishment? Might he not rightfully do to them as they had caused to be done to so many others? The public execution of a score of those who had been most active and most brutal, might break the spell which they had exercised over the unhappy children of Africa.

It is vain here to make a comparison between the feeble Jewish Commonwealth and the majestic Roman Empire, which, when it ruled the earth, tolerated all religions, and received injury from none. That had other elements of unity—power, conquest, and dominion. It was in no danger of being mingled and lost in other nations, since it ruled over all.

Far different was the state of the children of Israel, not yet formed into a nation, wandering like a caravan

across the desert, and ready to crumble into its sands. They had need to cast out every element of discord, the greatest of which was diversity of religion. Their only safety was in a perpetual guard against that demon-worship, which the more debasing it was, the more it exercised over them a horrible fascination.

Nor did these dangers fade away with the memories of Egypt. As they receded from Africa, they approached the hills of Canaan, which smoked with the altars of idolatry. Over all that land reigned a disgusting and cruel worship; not that purer form of idolatry, the worship of the sun, moon, and stars, which anciently looked up to the skies of Arabia and Chaldea, but a worship of wood and stone, by rites earthly, sensual, and devilish. Some writers give the impression that the native inhabitants of Palestine were an innocent, pastoral people—a simple, primitive race, that were hunted from their pasture-grounds by the Hebrew invaders. But history speaks another language. It describes their religion as a compound of lust and cruelty. They offered human sacrifices to their hideous idols, and even burned their sons and daughters in fire unto their gods.* Centuries later, the Carthaginians, a people of the same Phœnician origin, were found offering human victims upon their altars, on the shores of Africa; and the fact is beyond question, that among the Canaanites such sacrifices prevailed to a frightful extent. The Valley of Hinnom resounded with their drums, and with the shrieks of their burning children. Indeed they seemed to have a strange thirst for blood. Their favorite god, Moloch, fitly represented the cruelty and ferocity of the national character. So enormous had their crimes become that the land itself was ready to "vomit out its inhabitants." †

Against all participation in these dark idolatries, Moses

* Deut. xii. 31. † Lev. xviii. 25.

denounced the severest punishment; against prostration before their images, or offering sacrifices on their altars; against even attending their festivals,* or in any way countenancing their superstitions. Every monument of the old religion was to be thrown down: "Ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves."†

But this work of destruction was only clearing the way for the great work of construction. After all this wreck and ruin of cruel rites and degrading superstitions had been swept from the minds of the Hebrews, as they had often seen a vast plain swept by the winds of the desert, Moses began to construct the fabric of a pure religion—the worship of One Living and True God; and out of this central principle, as the root of a mighty banyan-tree, there sprang a hundred trunks and arms, spreading far and wide, so that a whole nation could dwell under its shade. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." That was the first principle imbedded in the Hebrew Law, the acknowledgment of which in itself contained a whole government, and out of the most incoherent elements formed a nation and created a state.

Such was the Hebrew Commonwealth—a state founded in Religion. Was it therefore founded in fanaticism and folly? or in profound wisdom and far-seeing sagacity? Religion may seem an unsubstantial foundation on which to erect any human structure. It is indeed intangible, but only as gravitation is intangible, which yet holds the solar system in its place. So is Religion the most powerful influence which can bind human societies together. Says Coleridge in his Manual for Statesmen—and the great English thinker seldom uttered a profounder truth, or one more worthy of the consideration of statesmen—"Religion, true or false, is, and ever has been, the

* Exodus xxxiv. 15. † Exodus xxxiv. 13; Deut. xii. 2, 3.

centre of gravity in a realm, to which all other things must and will accommodate themselves." Would it not be well if some of our modern pretenders to statesmanship did not so completely ignore its existence and its power?

The Religion which Moses gave to the Hebrews was not one merely of abstract ideas: it was incarnated in an outward and visible worship, by which it addressed the senses. On the desert there could not be the imposing and majestic service of the Temple. Yet even here was the Tabernacle set up and the altar, and was offered the daily sacrifice: the smoke and the incense below ascending towards the pillar of cloud above, and the fire on the altar answering to the pillar of fire in the midnight sky. This daily and nightly worship made religion a real, because a visible, thing; it appealed to the senses and touched the imagination of the people, and held their spirits in awe. And how did that feeling of a God dwelling in the midst of them, inspire them with courage for great efforts and great sacrifices! Weak as they were, they were made strong because they had a Divine Helper, and went forth to battle with confidence, as they sang the stirring psalm, "Rise up, Lord, and let Thine enemies be scattered!"

If further proof were needed to show the wisdom of Moses in the constitution of the Hebrew state, and of those laws which he set round it as its perpetual defence, it is furnished by its subsequent history, which we have but to follow to see how necessary, after all, were those restrictions, and how wise was the great Lawgiver in guarding his people against idolatry. The influence of his mighty name remained for a whole generation after he was in his sepulchre. "The people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and of the elders that

outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, that he did for Israel."* Those were the days of peace and prosperity, when judges judged justly, and rulers ruled righteously. But then began a decline. In spite of every precaution, the nation fell back. They relapsed into idolatry, and even slaughtered human beings on their altars: "They sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan, and the land was polluted with blood."† Then they reaped the bitter fruits of disregarded wisdom. Moses had foretold the greatest calamities from such apostacy,‡ and his predictions were literally fulfilled. The decline of the nation into idolatry introduced an element of discord which tore them to pieces by civil wars, and left them a prey to their powerful neighbors. Weakened by divisions, they were subjected to a foreign yoke, and at last were transported to Babylon as a nation of slaves. The same alternate rise and fall are repeated at many successive periods of their history.

Such is the story of the Hebrew Commonwealth—a story that has its counterpart in every age, and under all forms of government—always teaching the same lesson, that the decay of religion is the decadence of the state.

Is there nothing in all this worthy the notice of the political economists of our day? Are we grown so wise and great that we can despise the wisdom of antiquity and the experience of ages? History repeats itself nowhere more unerringly than in the rise and fall of nations. Human nature is the same in all ages and all countries, and the same causes produce the same effects. Nations seem to revolve in cycles as fixed as those of the planets in their

* Judges ii. 7. † Psalm cvi. 37, 38.
‡ Lev. xxvi. and Deut. xxvii., xxviii., and xxxii.

orbits, as they rise to glory and sink into decay. They begin in a low estate, with industry and all the virtues that are born of weakness and poverty, till growing strength turns their humility to pride, and wealth and power induce the luxury and its attendant vices which are the sure precursors of ruin. These are only different forms of one disease—an universal selfishness, which eats out the manhood of a people, as concealed rottenness eats out the heart of the oak, and causes at last even the giant of the forest to come thundering to the ground. By these things nations die. It was this internal decay and rottenness which destroyed the Roman empire, and may destroy the most powerful of modern states.

To meet such dangers, how weak and puny are the pretentious devices of political economists! In these last days, when men boast as if they had attained all wisdom and all knowledge, the economists claim to have reduced government to a science, which they have mastered as completely as the students of natural science have mastered chemistry; and yet, to judge from the frequent failures in the most civilized countries, from the rebellions and revolutions, this science of government is still but imperfectly understood. Does science furnish any antidote for selfishness? Does a knowledge of chemistry change the internal composition of a man's nature? Alas! that we must confess that these things do not alter human character; that men may be learned and scientific, and yet be as supremely selfish as before. It is a sad commentary on the moral power, or rather the moral weakness, of science and civilization, that the nation which claims to be the most highly civilized, and which is the most devoted to science, is the one which has had the most revolutions, and which has more than once been petrified and set aghast by a Reign of Terror.

Against all these perils, which in our day threaten not only government, but society itself, there is but one safeguard, RELIGION reënforced, not by civil enactments, but by every moral and educational influence. For a nation, as for an individual, the only security is inspiration from above. That alone ennobles human character or human life:

> "Unless above himself he can erect himself,
> How mean a thing is man!"

Unless he can reach up to something higher than himself, and take hold of a power stronger than himself, he is but a helpless unit floating in the great universe, like a mote in the sunbeam. To give any dignity to his life on earth, he must find an attraction out of himself—a central orb around which his little existence can revolve.

The same law holds in things great and small, with nations as with individuals. In the moral and in the material world there is one Divine order:

> "One God, one law, one element,
> And one far-off Divine intent,
> To which the whole creation moves."

Religion is the source of all man's highest inspirations—of all things great and noble; of all things pure and good; of all things sweet and gracious in human intercourse; of endless kindnesses and charities. It makes men honest and brave; it habituates them to self-control, and to obedience to law, and thus makes good citizens; while it inspires the higher virtues of self-sacrifice and devotion.

Are not these great elements on which to lay the foundations of a state? Such was the political economy of Moses when he founded the Hebrew Commonwealth on Religion. Was it wisdom or folly? Was it barbarism or civilization?

CHAPTER XI.

THEOCRACY AND DEMOCRACY.

Perhaps it does not often occur to readers of the Old Testament, that there is much likeness between the Hebrew Commonwealth and the American Republic. There are more differences than resemblances: at least the differences are more marked. Governments change with time and place, with the age and the country, with manners and customs, with modes of life and degrees of civilization. Yet at the bottom there is one radical principle that divides a republic from a monarchy or an aristocracy: it is the natural equality of men—that "all men are born free and equal"—which is as fully recognized in the laws of Moses as in the Declaration of Independence. Indeed the principle is carried further in the Hebrew Commonwealth than in ours: for not only was there equality before the laws, but the laws aimed to produce equality of condition in one point, and that a vital one—the tenure of land—of which even the poorest could not be deprived, so that in this respect the Hebrew Commonwealth approached more nearly to a pure democracy.

Of course the political rights of the people did not extend to the choice of a ruler, nor did it to the making of the laws. As there was no King but God, it was the theory of the state that the laws emanated directly from the Almighty, and His commands could not be submitted to a vote. No clamorous populace debated with the Deity. The Israelites had only to hear and to obey. In this

sense the government was not a popular, but an absolute one.

But how could absolutism be consistent with equality? There is no contradiction between the two, and indeed, in some respects, no form of government is so favorable to equality as a theocracy. Encroachments upon popular liberty, and the oppression of the people, do not come from the head of the state so often as from an aristocratic class, which is arrogant and tyrannical. But in a theocracy the very exaltation of the sovereign places all subjects on the same level. God alone is great, and in His presence there is no place for human pride. Divine majesty overawes human littleness, and instead of a favored few being lifted up above their fellows, there is a general feeling of lowliness and humility in the sight of God, in which lies the very spirit and essence of equality.

As the Hebrew Law recognized no natural distinctions among the people, neither did it create any artificial distinctions. There was no hereditary class which had special rights; there was no nobility exempted from burdens laid on the poor, and from punishments inflicted on the peasantry. Whatever political power was permitted to the Hebrews, belonged to the people as a whole. No man was raised above another; and if in the making of the laws the people had no voice, yet in the *administration* of them they had full power, for they elected their own rulers. Moses found soon after he left Egypt that he could not administer justice in person to a whole nation. "How can I myself alone," he asked, "bear your burden, and your cumbrance, and your strife?" He therefore directed the tribes to choose out of their number their wisest men, whom he would make judges to decide every common cause, reserving to himself only the more important questions. Here was a system of popular elections,

which is one of the first elements of a republican or democratic state.

There was a close connection between the civil and the military constitution of the Hebrews. The same men who were captains of thousands and captains of hundreds in war, were magistrates in time of peace.

In every Oriental State the point of greatest weakness is the administration of justice. Those who have lived long in the East testify that there is no such thing as justice; that no cadi, sitting in the place of judgment, ever pretends to such exceptional virtue as to be above receiving bribes. The utmost that can be expected is the hypocrisy which is the homage of vice to virtue, and even this is seldom rendered, for where bribery is universal, no one is constrained by shame to conceal it.

Against this terrible demoralization no rock can stand but that of the Divine authority. In the administration of justice a theocracy is an ideal government, for it is Divinity enthroned on earth as in heaven; and no other form of government enforces justice in a manner so absolute and peremptory. In the eyes of the Hebrew Lawgiver, the civil tribunal was as sacred as the Holy of Holies. The office of the judge was as truly authorized, and his duty as solemnly enjoined, as that of the priest. "The judgment is God's," said Moses, and he who gave a false judgment disregarded the authority of Him whose nature is justice and truth. The judgment-seat was a holy place, which no private malice might profane. Evidence was received with religious care. Oaths were administered to give solemnity to the testimony.* Then the judge, standing in the place of God, was to pronounce equitably, whatever might be the rank of the contending parties: "Ye shall not respect persons in judgment, but ye shall hear the small as well as the

* Lev. v. 1.

great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man, for the judgment is God's." * He recognized no distinctions; all were alike to Him. The judge was to know no difference. He was not to be biased even by sympathy for the poor: "Neither shalt thou countenance a poor man in his cause." † "Thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty; but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor." ‡ Magistrates were not allowed to accept a gift, for fear of bribery: "Thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous." §

To make the administration of justice august and venerable, the higher magistracy was committed to old men, whose white hairs and silver beards gave dignity to the judicial tribunal. They were called the elders of the congregation. After the Israelites reached Canaan, and were settled in towns and cities, this council of the ancients always sat at the gate of the city, which was the place of public resort. Here they received the homage of the people as they went forth to work in the fields, or returned at evening to lodge within the walls. When they appeared abroad, they rode on white asses, as the mollahs, or men of the law, in Persia, do to this day, and the heads of families returning from a pilgrimage to Mecca. The authority of these magistrates was sacred. No one might rebel against their decisions, nor even speak of them with disrespect: "Thou shalt not curse the ruler of thy people."

In vindicating the wisdom of such a "Department of Justice," it is not necessary to limit our comparison to Oriental states; we may extend it to all states, ancient and modern, the most powerful and the most civilized. Where can we find a machinery of law that is more perfect? The

* Deut. i. 17. † Ex. xxiii. 3. ‡ Lev. xix. 15. § Ex. xxiii. 8.

organization was very simple ; it was patriarchal in form. And yet with laws that were plain and intelligible, administered by men whose age and character commanded universal reverence, what could be more admirably framed to secure that which is declared to be one of the great ends of our republican government, "to establish justice," than this simple economy of the Hebrew Commonwealth ?

But now we come to a point in which it not only equalled, but far surpassed, our American Republic in securing absolute equality. In the Hebrew state not only did all classes enjoy the same liberty, and have the same rights—not only were all equal before the law, having the same claim to justice and protection—but the Hebrew polity aimed to secure among the people a general equality of property and of condition.

On the conquest of Canaan, it was divided into twelve parts, which were assigned by lot to the different tribes. Thus the Hebrew state was a confederacy of twelve small provinces, like the Swiss cantons. The territory of each was then subdivided, so that a portion of land was assigned to every family. This was a military division of the country. A share in the soil might be considered as a reward of every soldier who had fought for the Promised Land. But in the eye of the great Lawgiver, it was designed to have the most important political effects.

First of all, it settled the country. It gave to every man a fixed and permanent home. For forty years the Israelites had lived in a camp. They had contracted the roving habits of all wandering tribes. Now an army was to be transformed into a nation. The cottage was to take the place of the tent, and the pruning-hook of the spear. All this Moses secured by one simple law. Instead of introducing a feudal system, dividing the conquered country to military chiefs, for whom the people should labor as

serfs, he gave the land to all. Each tribe was marched to its new possession, every family entered on its humble estate, and Israel began its national existence. This determined the occupations of the people. By planting every father of a family upon a plot of ground which he was to cultivate, Moses formed a nation of farmers—the best citizens for a free Commonwealth. The miracle was as great as if immense hordes of wandering Bedaween were instantly transformed into quiet husbandmen.

In modern political economy it is considered necessary to the prosperity of a nation that it should have a varied industry, employing a part of its people in manufactures and in commerce. But Moses founded a state almost wholly upon agriculture. Manufactures he did not encourage. Doubtless the Israelites, while in Egypt, had acquired skill in mechanic arts, as they showed in working gold and tapestry for the Tabernacle. But the Hebrew Lawgiver took no pains to cherish this branch of industry, and it is probable that the arts afterwards sunk into the hands of slaves.

Nor did he introduce commerce. There was an inland trade which sufficed for the simple wants of the people. Their festivals, besides their religious design, probably served as annual fairs. The caravans, which passed from Asia to Africa, carried down their products to Egypt. But of navigation they knew nothing. Though Palestine lay at the head of the Mediterranean, in the best maritime position in the world, scarcely a bark ventured from the coast before the time of Solomon. Zebulon and Naphtali dwelt by the sea; yet nothing is said of the excellence of their ports and harbors. The attraction of Palestine was its fitness for agriculture: "The Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills;

a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and figtrees, and pomegranates ; a land of oil-olive and honey."*

This aversion to commerce Moses may have derived from the Egyptians, who had a horror of the sea. But he had other reasons for it, and his policy in this respect is another proof of his profound political sagacity. Commerce promotes intercourse with foreign nations, which for the best reasons he wished to discourage. By dispersing abroad the citizens of a State, it weakens the tie which binds them to their country. A nation that does not live at home, quickly loses its nationality. Of this the Jews at this day are the best possible proof. Scattered in all countries, they are equally ready to lend their money to Christian or Turk, and to fight for or against any people or cause. Agriculture, on the other hand, keeping all the inhabitants at home, promotes patriotism and attachment to the national religion. Farmers are the strength of a state, for they are generally both peaceful citizens and brave warriors. A small state is never so invincible as when all its citizens are independent freeholders. Then every man has an interest rooted in the soil. He fights for his country because he fights for his home.

Commerce, too, would introduce foreign luxury, which would corrupt the simplicity of a democratic state. True, it might make the Hebrews rich. But it was not the object of Moses to make his people opulent, but free, contented, and happy. He aimed not to erect a splendid monarchy, like that of Egypt or Assyria, but to found a simple and religious Commonwealth. By confining the Hebrews to rural occupations, he preserved a Spartan frugality and economy, the most proper to a free state. He preserved a general equality among the people. Even to

* Deut. viii. 7 8.

the humblest was secured his little home-lot, so that, however poor, he would still feel that he was on the same plane with his neighbors, working in the same fields, performing the same labor, and entitled to the same respect.

But this simplicity and equality could not long have remained, since large estates would begin to swallow up the smaller, but for another law, that *the land was inalienable.* In Egypt the soil belonged to the king, of whom the people received it as tenants. So the Divine Ruler reserved to himself the title to the new country which the Israelites were to enter: "The land shall not be sold forever; for the land is mine, for ye are strangers and sojourners with me."* A man could sell the produce of his farm, or make over the income of an estate for a term of years; but the land itself was the gift of God to his family, and remained in it from generation to generation.

Political writers may object to this as an agrarian law. But its effect was most happy. It prevented the accumulation of great estates. It checked the ambition of the chiefs. It formed a barrier to the influx of foreign luxury, and to those civil discords which always spring from great inequalities of social condition. The disregard of this law at a later period was one of the causes which hastened the ruin of the state. "Woe unto them," said the prophet, "that lay field to field till there be no place, that they may be left alone in the midst of the earth!"

But at the beginning the Hebrew state presented the remarkable spectacle of two millions and a half of people, all equal in rank, and very nearly so in condition. This fact is the more surprising when contrasted with the monstrous inequalities which prevailed in other Oriental countries. Indeed, a parallel to this it would not be possible to find in the most democratic modern state.

* Lev. xxv. 23.

By this equal distribution of the landed property of the nation, the law furnished the strongest barrier against pauperism. Still, in the best regulated society, inequality of conditions must arise. Special enactments, therefore, were added to protect the poor from oppression, and to soften the hardships of their lot. The laborer, who depended on his daily wages, was to be paid promptly: "The wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning." * Certain property was sacred: "No man shall take the nether or the upper millstone to pledge; for he taketh a man's life." †

If, by a series of calamities, a man had become impoverished, his more prosperous neighbors were enjoined to lend him money; and although this was not a statute, to the violation of which was annexed a legal penalty, it was a rule which could not be disregarded without a degree of infamy, such as would attach to an Arab chief, who should violate the laws of hospitality. Thus did the Hebrew law enjoin a mutual helpfulness that is the best guard against inequalities of condition.

The humanity of the Hebrew code is further seen in its mitigation of slavery. This was a legal institution of Egypt, out of which they had just come. They themselves had been slaves. Their ancestors, the patriarchs, had held slaves. Abraham had over three hundred servants born in his house. ‡ The relation of master and slave they still recognized. But by how many limitations was this state of bondage alleviated! No man could be subjected to slavery by violence. Man-stealing was punished with death. § The more common causes of servitude were theft or debt. A robber might be sold to expiate his crime; or a man overwhelmed with debt, might sell himself to

* Lev. xix. 13; Deut. xxiv. 15. † Deut. xxiv. 6, 10–12.
‡ Gen. xiv. 14. § Ex. xxi. 16; Deut. xxiv. 7.

pay it; that is, he might bind himself to service for a term of years. Still, he could hold property, and the moment he acquired the means, might purchase back his freedom, or he might be redeemed by his nearest kinsman.* If his master treated him with cruelty; if he beat him so as to cause injury, the servant recovered his freedom as indemnity.† At the longest, his servitude came to an end in six years. He then recovered his freedom as a natural right: "If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve; and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing." ‡ A Hebrew slave was, therefore, merely a laborer hired for six years. Nor did the law permit the faithful servant to go forth in naked poverty, and with the abject feeling of a slave still clinging to him. He was to be loaded with presents by his late master—sheep, oil, fruits, and wine—to enable him to begin housekeeping. § Thus for a Hebrew there was no such thing as hopeless bondage. The people were not to feel the degradation of being slaves. God claimed them as His own, and as such they were not to be made bondmen. ‖ Every fiftieth year was a jubilee, a year of universal emancipation. Then "liberty was proclaimed throughout all the land to all the inhabitants thereof." ¶ This was the time of the restitution of all things. Though a man had sold himself as a slave, his right in the land was not alienated. It now returned to him free of encumbrance. At the year of jubilee all debts were extinguished. His native plot of ground, on which he played in childhood, was restored to him in his old age. Again he cultivated the paternal acres. He was not only a free man, but a holder of property.

It is true these rights were limited to slaves of Hebrew descent. The Canaanites were considered as captives in

* Lev. xxv. 49. † Ex. xxi. 26, 27. ‡ Ex. xxi. 2.
§ Deut. xv. 13–15. ‖ Lev. xxv. 42. ¶ Lev. xxv. 10.

war, whose lives had been spared by the conquerors. The Gibeonites employed artifice to obtain this hard condition, that they might remain in the land as a servile race. A stranger, therefore, might be a servant forever. But even these foreign Helots had many rights. They, as well as the Hebrews, enjoyed the rest of the Sabbath.* They shared the general rejoicing on the great festivals. To certain feasts they were especially to be invited.† Thus the hearts of the bondmen were lightened in the midst of their toil. They were always to be treated with humanity and kindness. In fact, they lived in the houses of their masters more as hired servants than as slaves. They were the family domestics, and were often the objects of extreme attachment and confidence. Says Michaelis : "The condition of slaves among the Hebrews was not merely tolerable, but often extremely comfortable."

That the sympathies of the law were with the oppressed against the oppressor, appears from the singular injunction that a foreign slave, who fled to a Hebrew for protection, should not be given up : "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee." ‡ No Fugitive Slave Law remanded the terror-stricken fugitive to an angry and infuriated master, and to a condition more hopeless than before.

Contrast this mild servitude with the iron bondage which crushed the servile class in other ancient nations : "Among the Romans slaves were held—*pro nullis—pro mortuis—pro quadrupedibus*—as no men—as dead men—as beasts ; nay, were in a much worse state than any cattle whatever. They had no *head* in the state, no *name*, no tribe or register. They were not capable of being injured, nor could they take by purchase or descent ; they had no heirs, and could make no will. Exclusive of what was

* Ex. xx. 10. † Deut. xii. 18, and xvi. 11. ‡ Deut. xxiii. 15.

called their *peculium*, whatever they acquired was their master's; they could neither plead, nor be pleaded, but were entirely excluded from all civil concerns; were not entitled to the rights of matrimony, and therefore had no relief in case of adultery; nor were they proper subjects of cognation or affinity. They might be sold, transferred, or pawned, like other goods or personal estate; for goods they were, and as such they were esteemed." *

Can there be a greater contrast between the laws of different states than that between the Roman law and the Hebrew law in regard to slaves? And yet Rome was the most powerful empire on the earth, and claimed to be highly civilized. But which code leans more to barbarism? Which is instinct with the spirit of a new and better civilization? Moses was the first to recognize slaves as human beings. No matter how low the slave might be in the scale of rank—how abject his condition—he was A MAN. We boast of this doctrine of equality as if it were a modern discovery, and popular assemblies applaud, or sing in chorus, the noble line of Burns,

"A man's a man for a' that,"

forgetting that the fine sentiment of the poet was a recognized truth and a principle of law more than thirty centuries before he was born. Indeed no other state, ancient or modern, not Scotland or Switzerland, answered more fully to the poet's dream of simplicity and equality than that which was planted on the Judean hills. A state which respected manhood and womanhood, and in which labor was honorable, and agricultural labor above all the most honored of human pursuits, was the very one in which the free-hearted Scot might have

"Walked in glory and in joy
Behind his plough along the mountain side."

* Horne's Introduction. American edition. Vol. II., p. 166. Note.

Such was the democracy of theocracy—a democracy not merely joined with theocracy in a forced and unnatural union—an alliance of two systems which were by nature hostile, and ready to fly apart; but a union in which one sprang out of the other. Men were equal *because* God was their Ruler—a Ruler so high that before Him there was neither great nor small, but all stood on the same level.

But the Hebrew Law did not stop with equality: it inculcated fraternity. A man was not only a man, he was a brother. That Law contains some of the most beautiful provisions ever recorded in any legislation, not only for the cold administration of justice, but for the exercise of humanity. The spirit of the Hebrew Law was broader than race, or country, or kindred. What liberality, for example, in its treatment of foreigners! In the Exodus of the Israelites; in their migration from the Delta to the Desert; in their long wanderings through the wilderness; and in their approaches to the Holy Land—they came in contact with other tribes and nations. With these they were often at war; but after the war there were great numbers of persons of foreign birth settled among them, and unless guarded by special enactments, they were liable to be objects of hatred and persecution. Among the ancients generally a foreigner had no rights in any country but his own. In some languages the very word "stranger" was synonymous with enemy. Against all these race hatreds Moses set up this command, "Thou shalt not oppress a stranger"—which he enforced upon the Israelites by the touching remembrance of their own bitter experience—"for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt."* Perhaps indeed he thought of himself—how he had once fled to this land of Midian, and been a wanderer among these mountains; and remembering his own days of lone-

* Ex. xxiii. 9.

liness and exile, he bade them regard with pitying tenderness those who were strangers, as he had been.

But not only were foreigners to be tolerated; they were to receive the fullest protection: "Ye shall have one manner of law as well for the stranger as for one of your own country."* If they chose to be naturalized, they became entitled to all the privileges of Hebrews.

Still further, all were required to render acts of neighborly kindness, which would be considered too minute to be specified in modern law. Whoever saw an ox going astray, was required to return it to the owner. The chief property of the husbandman, next to his land, was his cattle. And thus the Law saved to him his most valuable possession.

In several requirements, we discern a pity for the brute creation. Long before modern refinement of feeling organized societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals, Moses recognized dumb beasts as having a claim to be defended from injury. If one saw the ass even of an enemy lying under its burden, he was to lift it up.† Birds' nests were protected from wanton destruction.‡ Even the semblance of an unnatural act was forbidden: "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk." § This may appear an over-refinement of legislation; but it shows the delicacy of feeling of the Lawgiver—that he shrank even from the appearance of barbarity. Thus he strove to extinguish the spirit of cruelty. If these enactments seem trifling, they at least indicate the strong instinct of humanity which framed these ancient statutes.

But perhaps the most beautiful provision of the Law was for the poor. When the land was rejoicing at the time of the vintage, they were not forgotten: "When ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the

* Lev. xxiv. 22. † Ex. xxiii. 4, 5. ‡ Deut. xxii. 6. § Ex. xxiii. 19.

corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvests. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and the stranger."* If the reaper dropped a sheaf in the field, he might not return to take it. Whatever olives hung on the bough, or clusters on the vine, after the first gathering, were the property of "the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow."† Under the shelter of this law came many a Ruth, gleaning the handfuls of golden corn to carry home to her mother, who was thus saved from utter destitution. By these means the Law kept the poor from sinking to the extreme point of misery. It prevented that hopeless poverty which forces the Irish peasant to emigrate. It kept them in the country. At the same time, by throwing in their path these wayside gifts, it saved them from theft or vagabondage. As a proof of its successful operation, it is a curious fact that, in the five books of Moses, such a class as beggars is not once mentioned! The tradition of caring for those of their own kindred, remains to this day; and it is an honorable boast that among the swarms of beggars that throng the streets of the Old World or the New, one almost never finds a Jew!

In these humane provisions may be traced the germ of those asylums and hospitals for the relief of human misery which now cover the civilized world.

The Law also took under its care all whom death had deprived of their natural protectors: "Ye shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child." They were sacred by misfortune. God would punish cruelty to them: "If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry unto me, I will surely hear their cry; *and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.*"‡

* Lev. xix. 9, 10. † Deut. xxiv. 19-21. ‡ Ex. xxii. 22-24.

This last provision strikes me the more from its contrast with what I have observed in another country of Asia, which boasts of a religion derived from the remotest antiquity, and inspired with a Divine wisdom. Only six years since I was in India, where, among other things that opened my eyes, I learned that the condition of widows had been made hardly more tolerable by the abolition of the suttee; that when a husband died, his widow was looked upon as one accursed, whose only act of dignity was to throw herself upon his funeral pile, and let her ashes mingle with his. If she dared to live, she was subjected to sufferings and humiliations, even from her own nearest kindred, from which death itself were a relief. From that inhumanity of the Hindoo, which extinguishes even the promptings of nature, I turn to the Hebrew lawgiver, and find him looking after the poorest and the weakest, the loneliest and the most suffering, of the daughters of Israel, that he may protect those who had lost their natural protectors; and that, speaking in the name of the Highest, he warned any who would do them wrong, that their wives should be doomed to widowhood and their children to orphanage! Thus the Hebrew Law took the poor and the weak under its special protection. If a man had any physical infirmity; if he were blind or deaf, that, instead of exposing him to be mocked at, furnished the strongest claim to sympathy and tenderness. "Thou shalt not curse the deaf" [even though he cannot hear it,] "nor put a stumbling-block before the blind" [even though he cannot see it].* It is a beautiful trait of some savage tribes that they regard as sacred the persons of the insane. They do not dare to irritate the mind that has been troubled by a mysterious visitation of God. So under the Hebrew Law, death, sorrow, widowhood, or-

* Lev. xix. 14.

phanage, all threw a shield of protection over the desolate and the unhappy. By this spirit of humanity infused into the relations of life, all the members of the community—the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak—were united in fellowship and fraternity. One sacred tie bound them still closer: not only were they of the same race and nation, but they had an equal share in the same religious inheritance; all were fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

Thus did the Hebrew Commonwealth contain in itself the two principles of theocracy and democracy in perfect union—a union in which there was the greatest freedom consistent with order, and a degree of equality hardly to be found in any other ancient or modern state. And I make bold to affirm that there is not, that there never has been, and never will be, any true liberty which does not receive its inspiration from the same source. Not that modern governments are to adopt the theocratic form, but that the spirit which recognizes God as the Supreme Ruler of nations as well as of individuals, which inspires loyalty and obedience to Him, is the only spirit which consists with liberty. No free state can keep its liberty which has not God as its Protector. Men cannot protect themselves; they need to be protected against themselves. Man is by nature selfish, and if invested with unlimited power, he is by nature a tyrant. Men are the oppressors of men, and there is nothing against which society and individuals need to be protected so much as "man's inhumanity to man."

Let the student of history make a special study of the History of Liberty, and see how all spasmodic attempts like those of the French Revolution have perished ignominiously, because there was no power in mere liberty to restrain the natural passions of men. The Paris Commune may placard the walls of the city with the high-sounding

words, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity; yet what do these amount to, so long as there is nothing in the hearts of the people to check the universal selfishness? The catchwords of modern democracy will be powerless among a people who believe in nothing, and care for nothing, but themselves. They may disguise their selfishness in political phrases, as in forms of politeness; yet they will be the same as before—just as unscrupulous of the rights of others, just as eager to grasp everything for themselves. Experiments at self-government by such a people have but little promise of success. Liberty soon runs into license; a spirit of lawlessness ends in anarchy, and anarchy at last is drowned in blood. Human selfishness is a force so explosive that it shatters all the limitations that can be put round it, to compress and confine it, save only a military despotism, in which such experiments at liberty generally end.

For all these ills of society there is but one effectual cure. Religion alone restrains men on the one hand, and inspires them on the other; and without that, as the vital element working in the state, there can never be true liberty. It is God alone "whose service is perfect freedom"; who is the Creator of all men, and before whom all are equal; and looking up to whom in humble love and trust, men feel that they are children of one Father, and are bound heart to heart in universal brotherhood.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CRIMINAL LAW: WAS IT WRITTEN IN BLOOD?

Mild and humane as were many features of the Hebrew Law, it had one blot which cannot be effaced—its criminal law was the most harsh and cruel that ever stained the annals of mankind. So say its enemies, of whom there are many, for it stands in the way of many proposed changes and "reforms." The advocates of the abolition of capital punishment find it an obstacle, to remove which they must question not only the inspiration of Moses, but his wisdom and humanity. Forty years ago there was a movement in the State of New York to abolish the punishment of death, and its principal advocate made an elaborate report, some pages of which are devoted to the Hebrew legislation.* The Mosaic history, he declares, "is impressed on every page with the stamp of the superhuman—the superhuman at times running into the inhuman." Like every man of intelligence who has made a study of history, he regards not only with curiosity but veneration the most ancient body of laws which has come down to us, while he considers it wholly unfitted to an age and a country so highly civilized as ours. Its punishments are so disproportioned to the offence, that "it would be a perfect insanity of ferocity and fanaticism to think of applying them at the

* Report in favor of the Abolition of the Punishment of Death, made to the Legislature of the State of New York, April 14, 1841, by John L. O'Sullivan.

present day." With laws so rigid and unbending, enforced by penalties so barbarous and cruel, he does not hesitate to say that "The Code of Moses was scarcely less sanguinary than that which the Athenian legislator was said to have written in blood!"

This is a formidable indictment, and yet it must be confessed that there is a pretty strong presumption of severity in the number of capital crimes. In America the penalty of death is rarely inflicted except for wilful, deliberate murder. Other offences—such as arson and highway robbery—have been, and in some states still are, capital: but the number has been gradually diminished, till in the actual administration of justice they are reduced to one, and even in that, such is the morbid feeling of juries, that a conviction is with difficulty obtained.

What then shall be thought of a code in which there were seventeen capital crimes? Could a people be said to have emerged from barbarism which could only be kept under control by such sanguinary enactments? But Great Britain was considered a civilized country two hundred years ago, and yet there were on its statute books one hundred and forty-eight offences which were punishable with death, some of which, such as poaching, we should consider as of a very petty character, hardly to be spoken of as crimes.* In the Hebrew laws the punishment of death was always for crimes which struck at the very foundations of society (even though in some cases our milder laws may treat them as light offences), as, for example, disobedience to parents and contempt of parental authority. This was a relic of patriarchal times. The earliest form of human govern-

* Wines's Commentaries on the Laws of the Ancient Hebrews, p. 263.

ment was the authority which a father assumed over his children. Traces of this primitive rule are found in all ancient nations. Among the early Romans a father had the right of life and death. Much of this spirit lingered among the Hebrews. The parent had not, indeed, absolute disposal of the life of a child. Still his authority was very great. And it is a beautiful feature of the Hebrew law that it made sacred that parental supremacy which nature ordains. It required the young to render to the aged outward marks of reverence: "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man."* Whoever struck his father or mother, or cursed them, committed a capital crime.† And in extreme cases, a son who was utterly ungovernable might be given up to the same punishment.‡ The great lawgiver judged that an incorrigible son was a hopeless member of society, and he was therefore cut off in the beginning of his career to ruin. If under our laws disobedience to parents is made a light offence, it is a question whether that is to be put to the credit of our civilization.

So the Hebrew laws were more strict than ours in protecting female chastity. The nations around the Israelites were sunk in the vices of Sodom. Lest they should

* Lev. xix. 32. † Ex. xxi. 15.

‡ "If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and that when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them; then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; and they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear and fear." Deut. xxi. 18–21.

be snared in such practices, these horrible pollutions were punished with death. All licentious connection with strangers was a capital offence. In one instance an Israelite who brought a foreign woman into the camp was killed on the spot.* This severity was deemed necessary where the contagion of such examples tempted to frequent offences against purity. Something was conceded to the ancient customs of the East, in tolerating polygamy and divorce. Christ said that for the hardness of their hearts Moses suffered them to put away their wives.† But beyond this hardship, the law surrounded the feebler sex with a wall of fire. Violence to them was a capital crime. So were adultery and incest. In cases of seduction, the guilty party was compelled to make reparation. A man who seduced a maiden was obliged to marry her; and he forfeited the right, possessed by other husbands, of giving her a divorce.‡ If her father refused to permit the marriage, the seducer was required to pay her a dowry.§ Moses was jealous of intermarriage, and specified minutely the limits of kindred within which alliances were prohibited.‖ The least contact with impurity, however innocent, inferred a ceremonial uncleanness, which had to be expiated by a seclusion and rites of purification. Thus his law refined the popular sentiments and manners and morals. If the sacredness attached to the virtue of woman be a mark of the degree of a people's civilization, the Hebrews were greatly in advance of all other Oriental nations.

The laws for the protection of property were singular, but certainly they were not severe. They were substantially the same which, as we have seen, are still the law of the desert. The main principle was restitution of

* Numbers xxv. † Matt. xix. 8. ‡ Deut. xxii. 29.
§ Ex. xxii. 16, 17. ‖ Lev. xviii.

whatever was wrongfully taken, with ample compensation for loss. Certain property was still further protected. As the Israelites depended for food upon their flocks, he who stole a sheep was compelled to restore fourfold. Oxen were still more necessary for their use in agriculture, as the Israelites had no horses until the time of Solomon. A stolen ox, therefore, was to be restored fivefold. These laws might be easily enforced among a simple agricultural people, where the kinds of property were few, and the same possessed by all.

Lest, however, the thief should make way with the property, and then escape by a poor debtor's oath, the law provided that in case he could not make restitution, he should be sold as a slave to indemnify the man whom he had robbed. This may seem a harsh addition ; but when it is remembered that no Hebrew could be sold for more than six years, the punishment will appear singularly mild, especially compared with the law of England, which, until recently, punished with death not only highway robbery, and coining, counterfeiting, and forgery, but even petty larcenies.

Last and greatest of crimes in the scale of ordinary criminal law, are those against the person and against life. Here, if anywhere, we shall find the track of blood. The law is indeed rigid and relentless. Here it is in all its severity : "Life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe."* This our Reformer designates as "a part of that savage and monstrous *lex talionis* so abhorrent to the express injunctions as well as to the whole spirit of Christianity." "The law of revenge constitutes one of the very fundamental principles in the code of Moses—its cruel injunctions sanctioning all the most

* Ex. xxi. 23-25.

cruel impulses of the savage heart." It is true that it was sometimes perverted to sanction private revenge—a perversion which was rebuked by Christ, who repudiated it as a rule of individual conduct. It was never intended to legalize hatred, and taking the law into one's own hands. The Old Testament, as well as the New, required a spirit of forgiveness: "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."*

The only sense in which retaliation was authorized, was as a maxim of law, which helped to fix the measure of punishment for crime. As such it is the first impulse of rude, primitive justice; and it was the mode of punishment which was at once the simplest, the most natural, and the most easily administered. Indeed in many cases it was the only mode possible. How would our modern reformers punish such offences? By putting the malefactor in prison? But where was the prison on the desert? The penalty of imprisonment was unknown among the Hebrews in the time of Moses. Twice a man is said to have been "put in ward" until the Divine sentence could be declared. But except the prison in which Joseph was confined in Egypt, we do not read of such a thing until the period of the Jewish kings. On the desert the only possible penalty was one which could be inflicted on the person of the offender, and here the principle of strict retaliation for the crime committed, rigid as it may seem, was perfectly just. It was right that he who inflicted a wound upon his neighbor should feel himself how sharp and keen a wound may be; that he who ferociously tore his brother's eye from its socket, should forfeit his own.

It is worthy of note that the same law was adopted by

*Lev. xix. 17, 18.

the two most enlightened states of antiquity, Athens and Rome. Solon even went further than Moses, and enacted that "whoever put out the only eye of a one-eyed man, should lose both his own." * Is it said this is still pressing the claim of justice beyond the limits of humanity? I reply, the extreme severity of these punishments may have been the only means to restrain the outbreaks of passion and to prevent the acts which required such retribution.

It has been well observed that such a law could be enforced only where there was a general equality among the citizens. In the later days of Rome, when the spoils of many lands had enriched a few powerful families, this principle of strict retaliation was abolished, and fines substituted as a compensation for crime. But as the fine was no punishment to a Roman patrician, the law was no protection to the poor. The old Hebrew justice alone made all men equal. By that, the body of every man was sacred and inviolable. The hard hand of the laborer was as precious as the soft hand of the rich. The injured man might, indeed, take pecuniary indemnity. But he might refuse it, and insist on blood for blood. Certainly this was a stern law; but it afforded a powerful protection to the weak. No man dared to lay upon them the hand of violence.

The laws against murder followed the same inexorable rule—life for life—a law in which there was no element of pardon and pity. But Moses did not create it. It has been the law of the desert for thousands of years. When that old bearded Sheikh of all the Bedaween of Sinai, sitting under the shadow of a great rock in the desert, explained to us the operation of the *lex talionis* in his

* Michaelis's Commentaries on the Laws of Moses, Vol. III., p. 453.

tribe, he set before us not only that which now is, but that which has been from the very beginning of time. It was somewhat startling indeed to find that laws and customs which we had supposed to belong only to an extreme antiquity, still lingered among these mountains and deserts. The blood-feud existed among the Hebrews as it did among the Arabs. Kindred in race, they had the same fierce and implacable spirit as the descendants of Ishmael. Their resentments were quick and uncontrollable. No sooner had a man fallen than his nearest relative became the avenger of his blood, whose duty it was to pursue and take the life of the murderer. To a certain extent, Moses was obliged to yield to this impulse of exasperation and of wounded honor. It were easy, indeed, to forbid the Hebrew to seek retaliation ; but it was not easy to enforce such a law where it was a point of honor for a man to take justice into his own hands. Here comes the difficult task of the legislator—to deal with popular passions and prejudices, and to soften barbarous customs which he cannot wholly eradicate. It is very interesting to compare the unwritten law of the desert with the commandments of Moses; and to see how, in dealing with usages which he could not wholly suppress, he yet modified them in the interest of justice and humanity. He adopted a novel method to disarm the rage of the injured Israelite, which showed his thorough understanding of the popular passions. He did not forbid directly the attempt to take revenge, but gave full scope to the natural feeling of resentment and indignation. The avenger of blood might follow with swift foot upon the murderer's track, and if he overtook him and put him to death, the law held him free. But at the same time it gave the criminal a chance for his life. Six cities were designated—three on either side Jordan—as Cities of Ref-

uge. They were sacred, as inhabited by the priests, and the avenger of blood could not enter them. They stood on the great highways of the country, and the roads to them were always to be kept open. To these the manslayer might flee. Here he was safe until he could have a fair trial. He was protected from the first burst of the avenger's fury till his crime should receive an impartial examination. In case of accidental homicide, or of manslaughter committed in a moment of passion, he was not put to death, although, as a matter of safety, he was compelled to reside for a time in the City of Refuge, since such was the popular feeling that he could not appear abroad.* Thus indirectly, but most effectually, did Moses guard against a sudden and bloody revenge. Even the author of this Report admits that this feature of the Jewish law was "perhaps the utmost mitigation practicable of the existing practice and irresistible passion" of a "semi-savage" race.

On the other hand, if, upon trial, the refugee were found to have committed deliberate murder, this sanctuary should not protect him, but he might be torn from the altar, and given up to justice.† For this great crime the punishment was death, without redemption or commutation. Mahomet allowed the kinsman to take pecuniary compensation for the blood of his relative. But the law of Moses was absolute: "Ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer."‡ But the crime must be clearly proved. It must be premeditated, as when one lay in wait for his victim. The circumstances of the act must establish beyond a question that it was a cool, deliberate murder. Thus the death must be caused by a weapon, and not by a blow inflicted with the fist. And

* For the fullest account of the Cities of Refuge, see Numbers xxxv.
† Ex. xxi. 14. ‡ Numbers xxxv. 31, 33.

lest the accused should be hastily condemned, Moses incorporated in his statutes that provision, which is deemed one of the greatest securities of modern law, that a man should not be convicted of a capital crime on the testimony of a single witness.*

An additional barrier to a rash and unjust decision was the severity with which the law punished perjury. Whoever testified against another falsely, was liable to the penalty of the very crime of which he had accused his neighbor: "Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother. And thine eye shall not pity, but life shall go for life." † With such a retribution in prospect, few would attempt to swear away the life of an enemy. If the accused were condemned to die, when brought to the place of execution, the witnesses against him were required to throw the first stones. The most hardened villain, who had carried a brazen front through all the forms of trial, could hardly support this crowning infamy of being the executioner of an innocent man. He would tremble, and turn pale, and the fatal stone would drop from his perjured hand.

Perhaps nothing shows more the spirit of a law than the modes of execution for those who are to suffer its extreme penalty. Some may think, if a man is to die, it matters little in what way he is put to death. But if it affects not the fate of the criminal, it does matter as indicating the spirit of a people. Barbarous nations generally choose the most savage and cruel modes of punishment. Modern refinement has introduced the scaffold and the guillotine as the least revolting form of execution. Soldiers who disobey orders, have the honor of being shot, while vulgar criminals are hanged.

But it is not two hundred years since torture was

* Deut. xvii. 6. † Deut. xix. 16-20.

laid aside by European nations. James the Second himself witnessed the wrenching of "the boot," as a favorite diversion. The assassin who struck Henry the Fourth, was torn limb from limb by horses, under the eye of ladies of the Court. The Inquisition stretched its victims on the rack. Other modes of execution, such as burning alive, sawing asunder, and breaking on the wheel, were common in Europe until a late period. The Turks impaled men, or flayed them alive, and tied women in sacks with serpents, and threw them into the Bosphorus.

Among the ancients, punishments were still more excruciating. The Roman people, so famous for the justice of their laws, inflicted the supreme agony of crucifixion, in which the victim lingered dying for hours, or even days. After the capture of Jerusalem, Titus ordered *two thousand* Jews to be crucified! How does this act of the imperial Romans compare with the criminal law of "a semi-savage race"?

Under the Hebrew code all these atrocities were unknown. Moses prescribed but two modes of capital punishment, the sword and stoning. The first was inflicted by the avenger of blood, who, pursuing a murderer, overtook him on the road, and instantly despatched him. The assassin was not beheaded, but thrust through, or despatched in any way. For a criminal who was tried and condemned, the ordinary mode of execution was stoning; certainly the most simple, as it required no scaffold, and no weapon but the stones of the desert, and which must have caused death almost instantly. * If a criminal had been a notorious offender, his body might be burned

* Later in the Jewish history more cruel forms of punishment were introduced, such as casting headlong from a precipice, and exposure to wild beasts. But for these Moses was not responsible.

after death, or hanged on a tree,* as a pirate is hung in chains on a gibbet. Sometimes a heap of stones was thrown over his grave, as over the grave of Absalom.

But while a wretch might be exposed to these posthumous indignities, still, however enormous his crime, its penalty stopped with himself. It was a first principle of the law of Moses, that no child should suffer for a father's crime: a declaration unnecessary in our codes, since no one thinks of punishing a murderer's child, but very necessary in the old Asiatic world, where high crimes were commonly avenged not only by the death of the criminal, but by the extermination of his family. But the law of Moses struck the head of the guilty, and there stopped. No son or daughter was ruined: no hopeless attainder perpetuated the curse to those unborn.

Still further: a ruler who delights in cruelty, will seek, where he does not inflict death, at least to inflict lasting infamy. Despots have often regaled themselves with putting out the eyes of malefactors, or of prisoners of war, or with cutting off their arms or legs, or branding them with a hot iron, so that they should carry a mark of degradation to the grave. But of all this not a trace appears in the laws of Moses. No torture, no branding, no infamous punishment! Stripes were inflicted for petty offences. But this punishment implied no lasting dishonor, as we may be sure from the fact that it was often imposed on the proud Roman soldiers for slight breaches of discipline. Moses limited the number of stripes to forty, for the express reason, that there should not attach to this chastisement too great ignominy: "If the wicked man be worthy to be beaten, the judge shall cause him to lie down, and to be beaten before his face, according to his fault, by a certain number. Forty stripes he may give him,

* Deut. xxi. 22.

and not exceed; lest if he should exceed, and beat him above these with many stripes, then thy brother shall seem vile unto thee." * So scrupulous were the Jews in regarding this prohibition, that they always stopped one short, and inflicted forty stripes save one. In a single instance only did the law allow maiming, and that was in case of retaliation upon a criminal who had mutilated the body of another.

That the law was not animated by a vindictive spirit, appears from this very significant token—that it discouraged informers. Despotisms are always suspicious and cruel. They send out spies to watch the people. They bribe informers. But the Hebrew government was not vexatious or inquisitorial. It did not harass the people. Moses employed no secret police. He forbade the propagating of malicious rumors: "Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people." Informers were not allowed to approach the authorities, except in cases of idolatry or of unknown murder.

Such was the Criminal Law of the Hebrews—stern indeed, but not "inhuman" or unjust. Of course it will not find favor with sentimental apologists for crime: for it was not shorn of its terror by those easy pardons which take away the dread of punishment, and almost the sense of guilt. Moses believed in LAW, and that law was made to be obeyed. No law-breaker found indulgence from him. He punished disobedience with unsparing severity; the murderer and the blasphemer felt his iron hand. Yet never was a lawgiver more gentle to the children of sorrow, and "to all who are desolate and oppressed." Never did the awful form of justice seem bending with more of compassion for human weakness and infirmity, and for every grief and pain.

* Deut. xxv. 2, 3.

And is this the Law that was "written in blood"? No, not in blood, but in tears: for through the sternness of the lawgiver is continually breaking the heart of the man. Behind the coat-of-mail that covers the breast of the warrior, is sometimes found the heart of a woman. This union of gentleness with strength is one of the most infallible signs of a truly great nature: "Out of the strong cometh forth sweetness." So was it with Moses: with a natural delicacy and tenderness, made still more sensitive by his own peculiar experience. His life had been one of many trials, of loneliness and exile, and we can well believe that the thoughtful provisions that appear even in the midst of rigorous statutes, were the suggestions of his own sad memories, the blessed fruit of sorrow. It is this mingling of the tender and the terrible that gives to the Hebrew Law a character so unique—a majesty that awes, with a gentleness that savors more of parental affection than of severity. Crime and its punishment is not in itself a pleasing subject to dwell on; but when on this dark background is thrown the light of such provisions for the poor and the weak, the effect is like the glow of sunset on the red granite of the Sinai mountains. Even the peaks that were hard and cold, look warm in the flood of sunlight which is poured over them all.

Thus uniting the character of the Supporter of Weakness and Protector of Innocence, with that of the Punisher of Crime, Moses appears almost as the divinity of his nation—as not only the founder of the Hebrew state, but as its guardian genius through all the periods of its history. When he went up into Mount Nebo, and stretched out his arm towards the Promised Land, which lay in full view on the other side of the Jordan, he gave to that land the inestimable blessing of laws founded in eternal justice, and not only laws founded in justice, but laws in which human-

ity was embodied almost as much as in the precepts of religion. None were so poor and helpless but found shelter under the protection of the great Lawgiver. The orphans of many generations looked back to him as their father. The widow in the vale of Sarepta blessed him. The blind that groped by the pool of Bethesda had their way smoothed by his command. The deaf that sat mute amid the laughs of a joyous company, were safe from cruel sneers. The slaves were grateful to him as their liberator, and all classes of the wretched as having lightened the miseries of their condition.

Nor was that Law given to the Israelites alone. It was an inheritance for all ages and generations. That mighty arm was to protect the oppressed so long as human governments endure. Moses was the king of legislators, and to the code which he left rulers of all times have turned for instruction. Thence Alfred and Charlemagne derived statutes for their realms. To that code turned alike the Puritans under Cromwell, who founded the Commonwealth of England, and the Pilgrim Fathers, who founded the Commonwealths of New England.

"Whence had this man this wisdom," surpassing all the ancient sages? Is it said: He was "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians," and derived his laws from them? Yet he could not learn from them a wisdom they did not possess. The framework of his government was as unlike that of Egypt, as his rule was unlike that of the Pharaohs. Indeed the Hebrew state would seem to have been constructed on the principle of being in all things the opposite of the tyranny, the injustice, the inequality and the oppression, which were the rule in every Oriental state. The features which most command our admiration are those of which there was absolutely no example. They were wholly original, and must be ascribed to the genius

of Moses, if not to the inspiration of God. Hence they who deny the Divine origin of the Hebrew Polity, bear the highest testimony to the splendor of that intellect which created it. If all was the product of one mind, it is the most illustrious instance in history of the power of a great spirit to impress itself on the race. The name of Moses stands alone, as the greatest of antiquity, and the Hebrew law remains as its most wonderful monument.

In harmony with the solitary grandeur of such a life, was the manner of death—alone and on a mountain top. Moses' work was done. Through forty years of desert wandering, he had led the children of Israel to the borders of the Promised Land. Yet that land he was not permitted to enter; it was for others to reap the fruit of his labor. He had nothing more to do but to die. For this he went up into a mountain, from which he saw the sun setting over the Western hills, and knew that the time for his own sun to set, had come. There he died, and "no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day."

But what though his place of burial be unknown, his "sceptred spirit" still rules kingdoms and nations that were not born till centuries and millenniums after his dust had mingled and been lost in the boundless soil of Asia. "His line has gone out through all the earth, and his words to the end of the world." His laws have been translated into all the languages of men, and their spirit and influence have affected the legislation of all civilized countries. Thus the empire of the dead extends over the living, and words spoken on the desert more than three thousand years ago, which seemed to die away upon the hollow wind, are caught up and passed on from age to age, and from one hemisphere to another, by

> "Those airy tongues that syllable men's names
> On sands and shores and desert wildernesses."

CHAPTER XIII.

LIFE IN A CONVENT.

We had been musing so long on the past that we had almost forgotten the present, when suddenly a stroke of the Convent bell recalled us to our situation. Our time at the foot of Sinai was drawing to a close. We must go out once more upon the plain, and look upon the face of the Mount that might be touched. "Yohanna, order the camels!" We mounted, and rode out to survey again the plain of Er Rahah; and every time we turned and looked upward, the impression was confirmed that the height above us was indeed the Mount of God. Approaching still nearer, we drew up at its very foot, and looked aloft at the tremendous cliffs which hung over us. Perhaps some knowledge of this was in the mind of John when in his vision of the Judgment he saw the guilty calling upon the rocks and mountains to fall upon them, and hide them from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne. Following a course round the mountain in front, as we had followed one on the other side to ascend Jebel Mousa, we entered the Wady Leja, where are traces of ancient occupation, for thither pilgrims came, and monks made their abode, as early as the fourth century, and there in time arose a monastery, which afterwards received the name of the Forty Martyrs, because of the number of those who fell in a massacre.

The region about Sinai is full of such historical associations, which give it an interest only second to that given by

the Mosaic narrative. The Convent itself, as an historic pile, is more interesting than any ancient castle. It is perhaps the oldest Convent in existence. Though founded only in 555 by the Emperor Justinian, yet more than two centuries before, the Empress Helena, the mother of Constantine, had erected a chapel over the site of the Burning Bush. At that early day pilgrims crossed the desert, and monks built their cells in the rocks, and made the valley resound with their anthems and their prayers. Where a church was built, of course a fortress must be built beside it for its protection. The bloody hand of Mahomet could not always protect it against the fierce tribes of the Peninsula. The Convent has always been a post of danger, as it was on the border-line between two religions—Islam and Christianity—or rather, in the territory of the enemy, where it stood as a solitary citadel of the faith. It has often had to stand a siege, when nothing but its walls and towers kept it from destruction. But if those were days of peril without, they were days of prosperity within. Looking round the interior of the Convent, I observed that it was surrounded with a corridor on each story, upon which the cells of the monks opened, and in those days there were hundreds within its walls. Ah me! how the glory of the former dispensation has departed, when now there are but little over a score to keep up its round of services, and perpetuate the traditions of many generations.

As we came back to the Convent after our excursion, it was no longer with the feeling we had the first day, when we were strangers and pilgrims. We now felt that we were coming home, for we had become quite domesticated in the ancient monastery. The good monks had done everything to make us comfortable. Beside our rooms, they had given up to us the large reception-room of the Convent, in which they left us undisturbed. They

never intruded upon us, appearing only when they came at our call, but were always ready to respond to any little request we had to make, showing us through the Church, the Chapel of the Burning Bush, and the Library. Of course we did not accept this as a free gift. When it came to the settling, we paid as much as we should have paid at the first hotel in Cairo. But no matter for that: we were none the less glad that we could obtain such accommodation at any price, and recorded our acknowledgments in the Visitors' Book, saying, as we could in all sincerity, that we were "most grateful for their kindness and hospitality." The privilege that we prized the most was the use of the reception-room, where we could sit all day, reading and writing, as if we were in our libraries at home; while we heard just enough of the life of the Convent that went on around us to fill our ears with a drowsy hum, and to fall in with our desire for undisturbed repose. Towards evening we would go up on the roof to watch the sunset as it touched the red tops of the granite mountains, and to inhale the evening wind that came up the valley. Miss Martineau, when she was here some forty years ago, was struck with the wild, strange beauty of this narrow pass—a beauty not unmingled with terror, when she thought of what it must be at other seasons of the year. She writes: "How the place can be endured in Summer, I cannot conceive. The elevation of the whole region, it is true, is such that the season is more backward than that of Cairo by two months; but this elevation can avail little to an abode placed in an abyss of bare rocks. I was struck with this the first night, when I went out into our corridor after ten o'clock to see the moon come up between two peaks, her light being already bright on the western summits. Still and sweet as was the scene—the air being hazy with moonlight in this rocky

basin—there was something oppressive in the nearness of the precipices, and I could not but wonder what state of nerve one would be in during Summer and in seasons of storm. The lightning must fill this space like a flood, and the thunder must die hard among the echoes of these steep barriers." "What must the reverberating thunder have been among these precipices to the Hebrews, who [in Egypt] had scarcely ever seen a cloud in the sky!"

This Convent life was not unpleasant, especially when enlivened with social intercourse. Our friend, the Archimandrite, was always ready to come into our rooms, and have a chat over a cup of coffee. Dr. Post had removed a sty from one of his eyes, for which he was very grateful, expressing the utmost satisfaction at the relief he had obtained, "grace à Dieu et à monsieur le docteur." I had half a suspicion (confirmed by what I learned afterwards) that he was in exile for some ecclesiastical offence, perhaps heresy or insubordination to his superiors. He had not been long in the desert; he had lived in cities, and seemed to like to talk of the world he had left behind. There was an old Archbishop of Gaza, perhaps in exile too, but who certainly bore his expatriation with remarkable serenity, for never was a prelate more smiling and benignant. He looked as if he were overflowing with goodness, and always ready to pronounce a benediction.

With the rest of the brethren we had just enough acquaintance to make our intercourse pleasant. We came to know them, and they to know us, and when we met in the court or on the corridors, they gave us a kindly recognition, and seemed pleased with the sight of strange human faces. There are now twenty-four members, who form a community entirely among themselves, being quite apart from the rest of the world. Some of them have been here thirty or forty years, perhaps not once in all that time leav-

ing these mountains. Indeed I was told that several of them had not been outside the Convent in twenty years. All the affairs of the household are managed by themselves. Some of the menial offices are performed by Arab servants, but every species of handicraft is wrought by the monks. Dr. Post, who had the case for his plants broken, found here a very good tinsmith. Any one whose garments are torn, or whose shoes are worn out in scrambling over the rocks, may find a tailor and a cobbler to patch them up again.

But all this is apart from, and subordinate to, their one great vocation, which is to pray. They tinker a little and cobble a little, but they pray a great deal. Their lives are spent in prayer. Seven hours out of the twenty-four are given to devotion. Several times in the day we hear a stroke, as with a hammer, on a *nakus* [a bent iron bar]—a sound which, like the voice of the muezzin from the minaret, calls the faithful to prayer. The reception-room is near the chapel, so that the voices of the monks come to us distinctly through the open windows; and we should be dull indeed if we could sit unmoved at the chanting of the songs of the ages, and of prayers which in different tongues are repeated in all the communions of Christendom. Nor are these hours of devotion confined to the day-time: fully one-half are taken from the night. At three o'clock in the morning the bell of the church awakes every sleeper in the Convent. It is now Lent, and there are more hours of prayer and special services, which are always open to strangers. To one of these, on Sunday morning, I was particularly invited, and was quite disposed to accept; although, to confess the truth, the service was a little early and a trifle late, commencing an hour after midnight, and ending at seven o'clock! In such a case I did as many do: I came late and went early—that

is, I rose at four, and retired at five—one hour instead of six! But what a strange, unearthly, ghostly hour it was! The idea of such a service had taken hold of my imagination. At first nothing could seem more akin to the highest spirit of devotion. To pray in the hours of darkness and of night! So Jesus prayed while men slept. And when I came out on the balcony, and felt at once all the holy stillness of the night, through which the waning moon was shining, and the stars were looking down from that pure sky of Arabia, "so wildly, spiritually bright," it seemed indeed as if this were an hour to forget the world, and draw nigh to God; to think how soon our little day of life would be past, and we "should be no more seen." I descended the stairs, crossed the court, and went down the stone steps (the pavement of the church is below the level of the court), and entered the church. It was dimly lighted. All the monks were there. One, who had been looking for me, conducted me to one of the stalls reserved for the brethren, where I was in the centre of the line. Opposite me a priest was standing at a desk, with his book open before him, on which fell the light from a shaded lamp suspended over it, and out of which he was reading, or rather chanting, in a dreary monotone, to which a younger priest beside me occasionally responded. The service was in Greek, and contained many things which would be approved by Christians of all communions. They read the Epistles and the Gospels, the Lord's Prayer and the Apostles' Creed; they chanted the Psalms of David and the Te Deum of Ambrose. All this was excellent, nor could anything be more impressive (were it accompanied by a little of the appearance of devotion) than the prayers of Chrysostom and Basil, mingled with the old majestic strains of John of Damascus.

Suddenly there came a change in the scene: all the

bells in the church-tower (there are nine of them—a full chime) began to ring, not to call the monks, for they were already there, but as if to summon the spirits of the dead, or angels hovering in the air, to bend lower to witness the grand ceremony of the prostration before the cross. The curtain which screened the inner sanctuary was drawn aside, and the priest emerged in gorgeous robes, supported or followed by others with lighted candles, bearing on a salver raised above his head a crucifix surrounded with flowers, which was placed on a low stand in the centre of the nave, around which the monks circled three times, and to which they made repeated prostrations. What degree of heart-worship there may have been in this, I cannot tell; but to me it looked only like a sacred pantomime.

As I sat amid such strange surroundings, I almost lost my personal identity. Who was I, to be here at this hour of night in a monastery, sitting in a monk's chair, and listening to these mournful chantings—these prayers for the living and the dead? I was already far gone into the region of shades, and it seemed doubtful if I should ever return to the living world again, if I had not escaped to the upper air, where, in the silence and peace of the night, finding that the world was still unchanged, that the stars were still above me, and the mountains round about me, I recovered consciousness, and my soul entered again into the body. But it is hard to shake off the feeling of unnaturalness which has taken possession of me. I feel as if I were in a dream: I see men as trees walking. Every nook and corner of this old, rambling Convent-Castle is haunted by the spirits of the dead. The place is full of ghosts. I hear them at night when the winds howl and moan amid the creaking timbers, and sigh along the walls, and die away through the passes of the mountains. It seems as

if whole generations of monks were coming back to haunt the abodes once familiar to them. Hark! what was that piercing sound? Was it the wind, or was it the shriek of some wretched monk who passed from life unrepentant and unforgiven, and who now has come back after an age of suffering in Purgatory to say a Midnight Mass for his despairing soul?

But if the question be whether this round of religious exercises has any very important influence in making men spiritually better, a candid observer must shake his head. At first one who listens in a musing mood to these midnight devotions, would think that out of such vigils and prayers must spring the consummate flower of piety; that these men, who are so holy that they cannot live with their fellows, but dwell apart, must be better than others; that all their conversation must be in heaven, and their lives be spent in deeds of charity.

But let us see. I observed the next morning that there was a strange silence in the Convent. Having taken the night to pray, they took the day to sleep. These hours of prayer were not then so much added to the usual times for devotion, but only night turned into day that day might be turned into night. Was there in this any spiritual gain?

As to the pretensions of superior sanctity, any such impression is quickly dispelled. It is enough to look in the faces of these men to see that they are, with scarce an exception, of a low stamp. They are very ignorant. The Archimandrite tells me there is not a really learned man among them. One or two I have seen walking in the avenues of the garden who had a scholarly look, but the mass of them are utterly without education. Three or four can neither read nor write.

But how can such men find admission into a religious

order? This question is answered by considering how these communities are formed. Men do not always join them from religious motives. Many enter a monastery as a refuge from poverty. In the Greek Church some of the barefooted orders are replenished as the Shakers are replenished in America, by recruits taken out of the poor-house. Some of the brethren here are not a whit above men who could be picked out of any decent almshouse. I do not see really bad faces, but they are common and coarse—faces with which one cannot associate any idea of spirituality. One or two of the younger ones look as if they were half-witted. These join the Convent, not from any religious impulse or inspiration, but as a security against want. They enter as laics, and are put to do menial offices. Some are mere scullions: they wash the dishes, they clean the lamps: and if, after four or five years, they are approved, they are received as full members of the order. Their priestly functions may depend on something else than learning or piety. One of the novitiates, hearing that Dr. Post was a physician, came to him for medicine to make his hair grow, for he said he could not celebrate the mass till he had a beard! He is now twenty-one, and his beard is but downy. The Doctor, who was much amused at the request, advised him to send to Suez or Cairo for a bottle of Mrs. Allen's Hair Restorer! This is a new qualification for a monk on Mount Sinai!

But there is something worse than ignorance. They are either the most credulous or the most untruthful of human beings: for they are the propagators of the grossest superstitions. Never were there such gross absurdities as those which they gravely repeat as facts of sacred history. Near the foot of Ras Sufsafeh is a granite boulder, which being, as an Irishman would say, "quite convan-

yint," is declared to be the one on which Moses broke the tables of stone when he came down from the Mount! Another rock is pointed out as the mould in which Aaron cast the golden calf! The Burning Bush Dr. Post finds to be a species of blackberry. If this be not gross imposture, it is childish credulity. But a man may be very ignorant, and even superstitious, and yet from daily communion with spiritual things, may grow into a higher life, which shall show itself in his very countenance. Not a trace of this does one see here. There is no such process of gradual elevation. There is neither natural refinement nor that spirituality which comes from converse with sacred things. Let a monk remain here forty years, and he that was vulgar is vulgar still, and he that was filthy is filthy still.

Nor is their life one of self-denial. Of course they submit to the prescribed fasts of the Church. It is now Lent, when the fasts, as well as the vigils, are kept rigorously. They will not touch a particle of animal food, but they will drink to excess. Almost the only industry which is pursued here, is making a kind of brandy out of the dates of the palm tree; and this not being prohibited, they use freely. We often see them the worse for liquor. Several of them who have been about the mountains with us as guides, before the day was over have been in a state of intoxication. It takes away from the merit of fasts when it leads to this. If they took a little more of simple, nourishing food, they would not drink so much brandy. Of course I am not particularly edified when I see these same old codgers standing in their places in the church, intoning their prayers!

But the gravest charge which I have to bring against the monks, is their utter indifference to the poor Bedaween by whom they are surrounded. To these Arabs

they bear a peculiar relation. When Justinian founded this monastery, he endowed it with two hundred slaves, to be, with their descendants, its servants forever—its hewers of wood and drawers of water. The descendants of those slaves are here to-day, and so kindly and wisely and religiously have they been treated by their Christian masters, that they have all turned Moslems! Nor do I wonder. The holy fathers treat them like beasts of burden—their camels or their asses. They dole out to them lumps of bread hard as a stone, such as one would hardly give to a camel. In the cell of one of the monks I observed a rawhide hanging on the wall. One of our party whispered that this was used by the poor man for self-flagellation. O dear, the holy man, thus to do penance for his sins! But a little inquiry drew out the fact that it was intended for no such spiritual office. Indeed the monk himself was much amused at the suggestion of his doing penance, and laughed heartily as he indicated by word and gesture that he kept it to flog the Arabs!

It goes to my heart to wander about these sacred mountains, and see the poverty and wretchedness of the people. The places they live in are not fit for cattle, nor is the food they eat, when they get any, which is not always the case. Dr. Post asked a little fellow what he ate. He answered by naming the poorest and coarsest food. "Well, if you don't have any food?" He answered with a shrug, drawing his poor tattered clout over his shoulders, that "he sat down on the ground and bore it, till God should send some"! The American party of which I have spoken were greatly captivated by the beauty of a little fellow (Mousa) with black eyes and graceful form and pretty manners. Coming down from the mountains, we met his mother (veiled of course), and saw where she lived. Her only house was a rock which

projected a few feet, under which she found shelter. A little fire of camel's offal sent up a smoke which blackened the stone above. A couple of goats were lying here as a part of the family. Can human beings live in such a cave? And yet this was their home; and hundreds of such there are, into not one of which does this rich Convent, with all its monks, who pray seven hours a day, cast one ray of sunshine or of hope.

The moral of all this is that a life of entire separation from the world, and seclusion in a Convent, is not the way to serve God, or to do good to men. A life more vacant of all high purpose, or of practical usefulness, I cannot conceive of; and when I went into the charnel-house, where are piled up the bones of whole generations, with a ghastly array of skulls, I felt that I saw before me the mouldering relics of so many wasted lives. Has this ancient Convent done anything to justify its establishment? One service indeed it has rendered to Christendom, in the preservation of the Sinaitic Manuscript, the oldest copy of the Scriptures in existence. But for its influence on the population around it, what has it done? It has stood here for thirteen hundred years, and what fruit can it show? It is rich: it has possessions in Austria and Bessarabia, and is under the special protection and patronage of Russia. But where are its missions? Where are its charities? Has it done anything to convert these tribes? The best answer to the question is the fact that after thirteen centuries it contains within its walls the only Christian church in all Arabia. As for its charities, it has had thousands of Arabs within its reach and under its authority, and yet it has left them as degraded and barbarous as before. Such is the testimony of history, which carries with it the severest condemnation. If the Convent at Mount Sinai is to be kept up for the same

purpose as the hospice of the Simplon, or that of the Great St. Bernard, as a refuge for travellers, that is another matter. To the devotion thus displayed I would pay the highest respect. Never did I feel more reverence for any men than for the monks under whose roof I once found shelter on the Pass of the Simplon. If there were the same spirit of self-sacrifice at Sinai as on the Alps, it would be counted worthy of the same honor. Certainly nowhere in the world is such a place of refuge more needed than among these mountains and deserts. But that is quite a different thing from claiming that the Convent which we now find here is an abode of saints, a place of such sacredness that to make a pilgrimage to it is an act of religious merit, and to live in it is to be in the straight and narrow path to heaven.

If I had any secret fondness for the monastic life, a few days in a monastery would be quite sufficient to disenchant me. I feel no temptation to turn monk: the Convent cell would be a prison cell. Indeed a sentence to such a life would be like a sentence to death. The very thought makes me shudder, as if I were descending into a tomb, on which a heavy lid of blackest marble were shutting down upon me. It seems as if one could be driven to this life only by the direst necessity, or by superstitious fear. It is said that Archbishop Hughes was once conversing with some Protestant clergymen in regard to the doctrine of Purgatory, when, after hearing their objections, he ended the discussion by saying "Well, gentlemen, you might go farther and fare worse." This was Irish wit, if it was not argument. Certainly it would require the most lurid prospect of "faring worse" to reconcile me to the purgatory of being buried alive in a monk's cell!

And yet I do not like to part from our companions in the Convent with words of censure. Indeed I feel more

inclined to pity than to harshness. Poor old creatures! they do not know any better. At least they have been kind to us. We were strangers, and they took us in. We had spent a few days together in perfect friendliness, and now felt a little grieved that we should see their grizzled locks no more; though we were amused to the last by slight tokens that they were not quite above some touch of human infirmity. The morning that we were to leave, we were up very early, when, as I threw open the door, I saw the Econome, or business manager, with whom we had had most to do, walking up and down the corridor. It was early for the good man to be astir. But he had heard that the Howadjis were to leave, and he could not have them depart without a tender farewell. It were base to indulge a suspicion that his early appearance had anything to do with the napoleon that was presently slipped into his hand. But that certainly did not abate the fervor of his demonstrations. He was not only friendly, but affectionate. He could not leave me out of his sight; he clung to me like a brother. He joked and laughed with me; he clapped me on the back.

The only place in the Convent which we had not yet explored, was the refectory, where the monks take their meals. On our expressing a desire to see it, he led the way. It is in a far corner of the Convent, in a hall, which, with its floor of stone and high arched roof, might have been a chapel, and indeed has an altar in it, and a small pulpit, or reading-desk, from which one of the brethren reads while the rest partake of their meagre repast. The table did not look attractive. The only food was hard bread, with soup of vegetables served in tin saucers, regular state's-prison fare; in fact, it was worse than is served to the convicts in any penitentiary in America. During Lent they have but one meal a day, and at

no time do they take meat of any kind, not even a chicken or an egg. We went into the kitchen, where a large pot of lentils was boiling, apparently their only dish. This was the very food for which Esau hungered. I had asked the good brother playfully, if he would receive me as a member of the order? But after seeing this, I thought it would hardly be worth while to sell my birthright of freedom for such a mess of pottage.

As a contrast to this, he took us to the Bishop's room, which was quite grand. Attached to it is a private chapel, which contains a number of small paintings, mostly of saints. But one represented a ladder reaching to heaven, up which monks in great number were pressing their way to where Father Abraham, or the Heavenly Father (for they do not scruple to represent the Supreme Being), with outstretched arms, was waiting for them. Unfortunately some had not strength for the ascent, and were falling off into the reach of devils, who, armed with long forks, like Neptune's trident, stood ready to spear the wretches, and toss them over to the place of burning. This was designed to be a terror to delinquent monks; but the jolly Econome seemed not to mind it, but made himself merry over the picture. Evidently the fear of future retribution did not sit heavy on his soul.

Meanwhile busy preparations were going on for our departure. I had heard the sound thereof from an early hour. As I had looked out of a porthole, I saw a procession of camels at the gate, even before it was opened; and when we descended to the yard, there were lying on the ground camels enough to furnish a caravan. It appeared that, as the supply was greater than the demand, there was a lively competition for the honor of bearing our sacred persons. It is said that there are four families in the valley who do the carrying trade, and as there is not work

enough for all, each claims a share. We left it to the sheikh and the dragoman to settle it between them. At length all was arranged. Our friend, the Econome, came down into the yard to see us mount, giving us each a little cup of manna as a token of his regard; the Archimandrite was there also to bid us farewell; while the Archbishop of Gaza, taking his morning walk on the roof, looked down benignantly, and wished us a pleasant journey. Then at the word of command the camels rose up with their burdens, and amid a general waving of hands and mutual good wishes, we filed slowly out of the arched gate of the Convent of Mount Sinai, and turned our faces towards Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XIV.

LEAVING SINAI—PASSING THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS.

When one has made the pilgrimage to Mount Sinai, there follows the practical question, how to get back again. Travellers generally return direct to Suez, which is at once the nearest, the easiest, and the safest route. The distance from the Wells of Moses, where we took our camels, to the Convent, is one hundred and fifty-three miles, which can be passed over by vigorous marching in six days. But that is excellent travelling on the desert. A camel's pace does not commonly exceed two and a half miles an hour (one that can go three miles is a very brisk stepper), so that it requires ten hours on a camel's back to make twenty-five miles. But once at Suez, the slow moving and the hardship are all over. The traveller is within "striking distance" of any point he may wish to reach. He touches both the railroad and the telegraph, and is thus within the limits of civilization. He can return in a few hours to Cairo or Alexandria; or if bound to the Holy Land, can leave the railroad at Ismailia, and take a boat down the Suez Canal to Port Said, from which a night's sail will land him at Jaffa.

But it is not always the shortest route which is the most attractive to tourists. Having reached Sinai, we were not at all inclined to retrace our steps, and traverse the same wadies and the same wastes of sand as before. We preferred to take a longer way round, which, though

it might prove rougher and more fatiguing, should still have the attraction of novelty.

Our first plan had been to go to Akaba, at the head of the Gulf of that name, a six days' march, and from there to Petra, four days, and from Petra to Hebron, or Gaza, six days—twenty in all, which, with four days at Petra, and four days of Sabbath rest, would make just four weeks. This route would take us to a point of great interest in the journeyings of the Israelites, Mount Hor, on which Aaron died. Petra too has in its rock-temples attractions well known to travellers. The only drawback to the pleasure of such a trip, is that this ancient city and the region about it are held by some of the worst Bedaween in all the East. Petra has long been notorious for its fierce and turbulent tribes, who demand enormous backsheesh from strangers who would pass through their country. Mr. Cook told me in Cairo that he had paid a hundred and fifty pounds to get a party through; that of late all expeditions that had been planning to go that way, had been broken up; and that he had declined to take the responsibility of sending any more. There were stories of travellers being taken prisoners, and held for ransom. At Sinai it was said, that even if we were to enter Petra, we might not be allowed to stay there—a presumption that was confirmed by the experience of a German gentleman and his wife, who left Sinai a few days before us. They set out boldly for Petra, and reached it, but were only allowed to remain over night, being driven out the next morning, glad to escape without the loss of all they carried with them, if they had not suffered also the loss of life. Even could we reach Petra, and be allowed to remain long enough to see it, we were told that it was doubtful if we could pass beyond it, for that the region between Petra and Hebron was held by tribes

who were in deadly hostility, between whom there was a blood-feud, which found vent in constant fighting. Of course it would be the height of imprudence to venture between such combatants. In that case we should be obliged to return to Akaba, and then march four days across the desert to Nukhl to strike another "trail." All this would involve a loss, in going to Petra and returning to Akaba, and diverging to the direct route, of a couple of weeks time (it might involve much more if we were forcibly detained), which we had not to spare, as we wished to be in Jerusalem at the Holy Week. These considerations finally decided us, very reluctantly, to give up Petra.

After all this, was it not provoking that our friends of the other American party, who left Sinai the same morning, *did* go to Petra, and remain there three days, and did *not* have to return to Akaba, but went on direct to Hebron, and arrived in Jerusalem only a week or ten days after us? However, when they told us the story of their experience, our envy was subdued. They got through by the skin of their teeth, and this owing to the fact that they had a dragoman who was a Moslem from Alexandria (ours was a Syrian from Beirut), who had a personal acquaintance with the sheikh at Petra, to whom he had once rendered some service (I believe he had saved his life), and by whose favor he secured protection. Before starting, he told me privately that he thought it a rash venture, but hoped he could get his party through. He *did* get them through, but at the price of such extortions and annoyances that we were not at all sorry not to have followed their example. Had it not been for the dragoman's personal acquaintance with the sheikh, who stood guard with him over the tents, they would have been utterly "cleaned out." All the time they were there, they were surrounded, not only from morning to evening, but

all night long, by insatiable Bedaween, incessantly demanding backsheesh, and ready to steal if the guard were relaxed a moment. A villain would come into one of the tents, and sit down on a trunk, and then demand backsheesh to get off! Another thrust a paper into the hand of one of the party, who took it, thinking the Arab might be offended at its refusal, when the rascal went off, but returned and demanded in a threatening manner ten pounds for the precious document! These little attentions of course made Petra a delightful retreat for a few days, even if one could not have it as a permanent residence. The dragoman told me in Jerusalem that he had to pay over a hundred pounds to get clear of the place! When they finally took their departure, they were followed by a last proof of attachment, in finding a Bedawee stationed on a hillside behind a tree, armed with a shotgun, with which he threatened to fire upon them if they did not pay some preposterous demand! To this they answered, not with money, but with powder and ball. After an exchange of shots, they charged upon him, and dragged him down, and finally left him tied hand and foot, and half dead, by the roadside. These things are more exciting to hear of than agreeable to experience, and after listening to their tale, we were quite willing that our friends should have all the glory, as they had all the annoyances, of such an expedition.

But between this difficult if not dangerous route by Petra, and going back directly on our path, there was a middle course, which would follow half way a return route to Suez—parallel to that by which we came, but farther away from the sea—and then strike off into the Great and Terrible Wilderness, passing midway between the Gulfs of Suez and Akaba, and crossing the great Desert of the Wandering, by which we should come up

through the Plain of Philistia, and enter Palestine by the South Country, coming out at Hebron, or Gaza. This route would be entirely new, and in the latter part of it, at least, would have a spice of danger which would be an agreeable excitement. This decided our wavering choice.

With such a route marked out on the map, as we left Sinai we picked our way over the ledge of rocks which lies along the garden of the Convent, and rode down the narrow pass of the Wady ed Deir, keeping an eye on the cliffs which towered on the left. As we came near their base, we passed the camp of the other American party, whose camels were being made ready for their long march. We had now before us the plain of Er Rahah, but we were not to cross it again, nor to climb that fearful Pass of the Winds, but bore away to the right, passing the hillock on which Aaron set up the Golden Calf! A more authentic spot is the tomb of a Moslem saint, who was a contemporary of the Prophet himself, and whose virtues are celebrated in the Koran. Here the Bedaween of Sinai gather in great numbers at a festival every year, which they celebrate with sacrifices and feasting and camel-races, and other sports of the desert. At this point we parted from our friends, not to see them again till we met in Jerusalem. They kept to the east, while we followed the wady which circled round the base of the mountains. All this time we had been in sight of Ras Sufsafeh, and we could hardly go half a mile without turning our camels to take one more look. Thus we slowly retired from this mountain presence, half shrinking from it with awe, while yet it held us by the fascination of its sublimity. At length there came a bend in our course, and we lingered long before we could withdraw our gaze. We were to see Sinai again from

more distant points; but this nearer sight we could have no more.

We were now in the Wady es Sheikh, which may almost be called the Amazon of the river system which winds about in this wilderness of mountains. It seems to be a misnomer to speak of a river without water, but the river is not always thus dried up. There are seasons when the dry bed becomes a torrent. The Peninsula of Sinai is visited at times by terrific storms, producing a sudden deluge, in which the barren wadies become the channels of great streams, and these mountain-sides are the rocky shores of foaming rivers.

But for the present we have no water — only the mountains. But these are so grand that we are never weary of observing their giant masses, their varied forms, and the marvellous richness of their coloring. There is a certain fitness in Mount Sinai being a solid mass of granite: that the oldest and most enduring of rocks should furnish the throne for the announcement of a Law which, in its essential principles of justice, dates from the foundation of the earth, and will endure to all generations.

We have now before us objects which are older than Moses. He lived over three thousand years ago; these mountains have been standing, the geologists will tell us, three millions! Whether they are right in their calculations or not, certainly for the data of the geological problem, it would be impossible to find a more interesting region. It presents peculiar facilities for study, in the fact that the rocks are all uncovered. These mountains have been stripped of their masses of vegetation; they have no such dense forests as those which cover the lower sides of the Swiss Alps. Here the rock-ribbed hills are all exposed, as if they would tell the story of their origin, and

of an existence which, to beings whose lives are short as ours, seems like eternity itself.

The mere sight of these great formations raises a question even in the most unscientific mind as to the harmony of the record contained in the rocks with the Mosaic chronology. One thing all must admit, that the world is more than six thousand years old, and that the six periods of creation could not have been six *days* of twenty-four hours, but six successive epochs, during which the earth underwent great geological changes. No one who looks up at these giant cliffs, which the torrents have cleft asunder, can resist the impression of enormous lapses of time. These wadies have been produced by the action of water. As the Niagara river has worn its way back inch by inch from Lake Ontario,

"Notching its centuries in the eternal rocks,"

so here the forces of rain and storm and flood have torn their way through the everlasting hills. But what ages upon ages must have been required for all this! What cycles of time, measured not by years, must have passed, what millions of tempests must have poured from the angry heavens, and what millions of floods must have rushed along the sides of these mountains, to wear a channel miles in length through the solid granite!

But the admission of this does not overturn the cosmogony of Moses. By no means. It merely shows us that the words of the Bible have a grander meaning than we in our ignorance had dreamed. We need only to enlarge our interpretations to the vast proportions of the revelation which we are trying to understand. Now we see through a glass darkly; by-and-by we may see that the universe itself is the grandest temple of the Almighty.

Whether the Mosaic account of the Creation agrees in all points with the discoveries of geology, is a question on

which men of science are the most competent to give an opinion. Some assume that there is an absolute contradiction, which no ingenuity can reconcile. There is no objection to the first chapter of Genesis which is more often urged, or with greater assurance, than that from geology. Some are so confident that this argument cannot be answered, that they are willing to stake their own unbelief upon it. Says Ingersoll: "If it shall turn out that Moses knew more about geology than Humboldt, then I will admit that infidelity must become speechless forever." Humboldt is certainly a great name to quote in controversy, though perhaps his greatness was more in his general survey of the vast realm of science, than in his complete mastery of any one department. If, instead of sweeping round the whole horizon of the Kosmos, we limit ourselves to the one point in hand, we may perhaps assume, without trespassing on the strict line of modesty, that we have in America a man who, in this special department of geology, is the equal of Humboldt, Germans themselves being judges—Professor James D. Dana of Yale College. "When I was in Germany," said one of the Faculty of Columbia College, who is himself well known abroad, "all the men of science whom I met asked me about 'that wonderful Dan-na' (pronouncing his name as if spelled with two *ns*), whom they regarded as the first scientific man in America, and as, in certain departments, second to no man living." This American professor, who is as modest as he is truly great, has devoted a large portion of his life, and he is now nearly seventy years old, to the special study of geology, and in this department he is the highest living authority, a place that would be conceded to him nowhere more fully than in the land of Humboldt. Yet it is he who writes: "To me the first chapter of Genesis is greatly

illumined by the revelations which science has made. I see nothing in modern developments to shake my faith in its inspired announcements, or in any of the essential truths taught in the Bible."

In this testimony other eminent geologists fully concur. Some who have made a study of the first chapter of Genesis in the light of science, find that if there are apparent divergences, there are also striking coincidences, particularly in the order of succession of animal and vegetable life. So marked is this, that some men of science, who are also devout believers in Revelation, such as Hugh Miller and Principal Dawson, have stoutly maintained that they are in perfect harmony, and that geology furnishes the strongest confirmation of the truth of the Mosaic narrative. Whether they are correct in this, or whether, on the other hand, the reconciliation of Science and Revelation may not require us to modify at some points our interpretation of Scripture, time may render clearer than it is now. A sincere lover of truth will accept light from every source, not only willingly, but gratefully. It is a poor tribute to the Bible to fear that the progress of knowledge will shake its authority. I believe too firmly in Moses to have any apprehension lest modern science should push him from his throne. Let the explorers and the discoverers carry their researches as far as they will (God speed them in their work!) : they do but bring fresh materials wherewith to construct the temple of truth. If we do not at first see how the old and the new can be joined together—how they are but parts of one great system—it is because we see only from a few points and angles. Let us but rise high enough above the world, and we shall see it as one complete, rounded whole. All truth is in harmony with itself. There is but one Creator, who has revealed Himself both

in His works and in His word ; and when men are wiser than they are now ; when they have climbed higher, and dug deeper, and looked abroad more widely ; then will it be made manifest that the two Revelations are in harmony ; that there is a perfect accord between that which came by holy men of old, who were moved by the Holy Ghost, and that which God has written with His own finger on tables of stone.

The mountains are older than Moses, but there is One who is older than the mountains, to whom Moses himself, perhaps while passing through these very mountains, lifted up heart and voice in that majestic psalm : "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God." This explains everything. Admit the Divine existence, and all mysteries are resolved. With God there is no reckoning of time. "A thousand years in Thy sight," continues Moses in this sublime ode, "are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night." Even the geological epochs—though they should be to our measurements of time what the interplanetary spaces are to the distances on our globe—what are they to Him whose existence is from eternity to eternity, from the illimitable past to the illimitable future ?

But apart from any geological question, these mountains attract the eye by their grandeur. When they were upheaved by forces from beneath, they were thrown into the wildest forms. Sometimes they stand off at a distance in lonely majesty, and sometimes they enclose us in a narrow pass. In such a pass we rested to-day at noon, by a rock shaped somewhat like a chair, which is pointed out as the seat of Moses when he tended the flocks of Jethro, so that as we took our places in it, we

were literally "sitting in Moses' seat." Another rock, with an altar-like form, is said to have been the stone of sacrifice on which Abraham bound Isaac. Pursuing our course in the afternoon, night found us within two or three hours distance of the Wady Feiran. We camped in full view of Serbal, which presented the same glorious sight as from the foot of the Pass of the Winds the night before we reached Sinai.

The beauty of the situation, however, did not prevent an early morning start, for we had a long march before us. For hours we were ascending, catching glimpses, as we look back, of the Sinai range. As we mounted upward, the surrounding summits sank lower, and we seemed to be emerging from the mountains. Then we crossed what in America would be called a *divide*, and for miles we descended a rugged, narrow pass, which brought us into another amphitheatre of mountains, where nature did not repeat herself, but varied the scene with new forms of splendor. Some of the views surpassed all description. There were mountains of red granite, that matchless stone out of which—because of its hardness, united with a fine grain, which takes the smoothest polish, and presents the most beautiful surface—have been chiselled all the obelisks of Egypt; and mountains of porphyry, of all colors from cream to black. In other instances granite was veined with porphyry and diorite, as if, when the mountains were upheaved, here and there a ridge or dome had parted under the mighty pressure from beneath, and through the rents and fissures thus made shot up streams from the boiling mass in the heart of the earth. The mingling of these elements produced a strange mingling of colors. The very ground under our feet was rich with color, for here and there it seemed as if we were passing over the ruins of an ancient city, some unknown Babylon

or Nineveh, so thickly was the plain strewn with what looked like bricks, yet there was not a brick among them, but only broken pieces of red stone which had crumbled from the mountain sides. Now and then we would stop our camels to count the number of colors, in which we could easily distinguish all the hues of the rainbow. The most prominent of these were *sober* colors—dark brown, and red, and yellow, and olive green—the very shades which it is the fashion of the day to use in the decoration of our interiors. I leave to painters to imagine the effect of these dark, rich colors thrown broadcast upon the mountains! The coldest and dullest nature must catch some glow and inspiration in passing through gorges where the cliffs on either hand are like battlements of walled cities, and the loftier peaks like castle towers, from which are hung out banners in purple and gold. How can a traveller be unmoved who

> "By this vision splendid
> Is on his way attended,
> Until at length he sees it fade away,
> And melt into the light of common day"?

The next morning we said good-bye to granite. The great mountain range which covers all the lower part of the Peninsula of Sinai, here sinks down like a wave in the sea, and is seen no more. It is completely submerged, not reappearing till it lifts up its head again in the mountains of the Caucasus, while over it here flows the dark red sandstone. New mountains come into view, which are often pyramidal in form, with strata as regular as the layers of the Great Pyramid, looking as if they might have been piled up by some race of Titans before man came upon the earth. The change of the geological formation is marked by a complete change of vegetation. In the soft sand little daises begin to put up their white heads,

and now and then comes the note of a bird. Dear little songsters of the air, never did their music sound so sweet.

The event of the day was reaching Surabit el Khadim, a mountain of striking natural form as well as historical interest, in which the range of sandstone ends, and which served in the early days as a site both for a fortress and a temple. We dismounted from our camels, and under the escort of Arab guides, first descended a rough pass, or glen, on the other side of which rose an almost perpendicular wall of rock seven hundred feet high. We clambered up the precipice, turning hither and thither to get a footing on a narrow ledge, and often obliged to stretch out a hand to our nimble and sure-footed companions, till we reached the top, and found ourselves on a broad plateau, where are traces of copper mines that were worked in the times of the Pharaohs: how far back in the list of Egyptian dynasties, we cannot tell. But the mountain was probably a place of worship long before it was pierced by mineral excavations, if it be true that the temple, whose remains we find here now, was standing four hundred years before the time of Abraham! This would seem to justify the assertion that it is the oldest temple in the world. Like the priests of Baal, those of Egypt chose high places for their worship. This point commands a most extensive view. To the south rise the peaks of Serbal, so that the priests, while celebrating their worship here, could see in the distance the smoke of sacrifices from the altars of Baal. Centuries after this, in the time of Rameses II., whose daughter took Moses out of the bulrushes, it is said to have been occupied as a military station, for which it had an obvious fitness, as it commanded an outlook over a large part of the Peninsula. It is even urged that the Israelites, in the march to Sinai, probably avoided this

route, lest they should be stopped by the Egyptian garrison.

The elevated point of view was of service to us, as it gave us a wide sweep of the country, and enabled us to outline the two routes before us, for we had come to the parting of the ways. It was now the third day from the Convent, and we had accomplished half the return journey to Suez. If the reader will look at the map, he will see that Surabit el Khadim is at an angle, from which one route turns almost directly west. By following this, we might have reached Suez by Saturday night.

But there was another route which turned to the north-east, which did not seem very attractive, as it was at once longer, more difficult and more dangerous, and of which we were forewarned that there was absolutely nothing to see! Murray says of it: "The route to Palestine by way of Nukhl presents no object of interest to the ordinary traveller. He had much better return to Suez, and go thence, via Port Said and the sea, to Jaffa."

No doubt all this was true. Yet to an adventurous traveller there is sometimes an interest in the very want of interest—in exploring what is most desolate and dreary. Opposite to us—perhaps eight or ten miles distant—rose a chain of mountains, that seemed islanded in the desert, a broad belt of sand sweeping round it, like an arm of the sea. How the white cliffs glared in the noonday! What a prospect of weariness in climbing those heights under the blazing sun! And once there, what awaited us beyond? Long marches over the burning sand! Fatigue perhaps to exhaustion, and weariness to fainting! Such was the prospect. Was it strange if one should hesitate a little before venturing into the unknown? Well! if we repented of our rash vow, made when we departed from Sinai; if we shrank from the fatigues and

exposures and perils; there was still a way of escape; it was not too late to draw back; the broad plain beneath us that stretched westward, opened an easy passage to the coast. Which way should we choose? The Doctor turned to me to decide. One way was ease and safety and speedy deliverance; in the other was uncertainty and danger. Yet there was a temptation in the very idea of plunging into that which was comparatively untravelled. From yonder heights stretched out the Great and Terrible Wilderness, which seemed to beckon us by its very desolation. There was a fascination in the illimitable desert, in its vagueness, vastness, and mystery. It did not take me long to decide: one sweep of the eye round the horizon, and we clambered down the rocks, mounted our camels, and turned their heads towards the way of the Wilderness.

CHAPTER XV.

THE GREAT AND TERRIBLE WILDERNESS.

Our marches bring great changes in a single day. Only this morning we said good-bye to the red granite, and this afternoon we take leave of the old red sandstone. It may seem a welcome change to turn our backs on a wilderness of rocky defiles. But one who has been riding for days through these wild passes, observing the fantastic forms of the cliffs and crags on either side, and their infinite variety of color, cannot without a regret turn away from these dark, sombre mountains. And to come down from all this to the desert, is a change which involves a double descent, a descent from the mountain to the plain, and from the richest colors to the perpetual glare of the naked limestone! It is a change from boundless variety to boundless monotony.

But there are always compensations in nature, by which she relieves her bleakest and most barren wastes. Scarcely had we descended into the plain which separates the great mountain region of the Peninsula from the Desert of the Wandering, before we observed new grasses and flowers peering up in the sand. A new geological formation had brought a new vegetation, and Dr. Post found fresh specimens for his collection of the Flora of the Desert. Monotonous and tiresome as it was, as we kept on our weary march all the afternoon, yet as the wide plain opened a view to the west, we saw the sun setting over the Egyptian mountains on the other side of the Red Sea. Meanwhile

the great wall before us rose higher as we advanced across the plain, and even its white, bare cliffs took on a sudden splendor as the setting sun tinged them with the glow of departing day.

And desolate as the region is, it derives interest from the journeyings of the children of Israel. As they moved northward from Sinai, they must have crossed this plain, and scaled that mountain range, which would have been an insurmountable barrier if it had been held by an opposing force: for it is a thousand feet in height, and so steep that, as we look up from below, the cliffs are like the battlements of a walled city. There are but four passes by which they can be ascended. We directed our course to the Pass of Er Rakineh, and when we drew near to the foot of the hills, we pitched our tents, as a prudent soldier sometimes camps for the night in full view of a fortress which he is to attack on the morrow. Here we lay down, as it were, "on our arms," to be ready to spring up at the tap of the drum. The morning brought us its new experiences, which, as we shall see, were not without a charm of their own.

The most picturesque sight on the desert is that of a caravan in motion—a long line of camels, following one another in single file, moving slowly but steadily across the waste, and disappearing on the horizon. The picturesqueness is increased when, as this morning, the camel-line moves up a height which brings it into bolder relief. As our camp was but a short distance from the mountains, we reached them at sunrise, and then took a foot-path, which, as it led directly up the steep, took us to the top in a couple of hours; while the camels, as they carried heavy loads, were obliged to take a more circuitous route, and were an hour longer in making the ascent. But this slow movement gave us one of the most striking scenes we had

had on the desert, as they went zigzag along the breast of the mountains, coming at every turn into distinct outline against the sky. When we reached the top, we sat down on a pile of rocks, and looked back over the plain to the sacred mountains, which we knew we should never see again. From this time we could no longer get a view even on the distant horizon, but we had hoped this morning, as the sun rose, we might have vouchsafed to us one more last look. There indeed was Serbal, with its peaks clear against the sky, and farther down was Sinai, but wrapped in cloud, as when the Lord came down upon its summit; and we saw it no more. This was a real disappointment. It was with a feeling as if the face of the Lord were hidden from us, that we uncovered our heads, and bade farewell to Sinai forever.

But below us the sun shone brightly on the sand, which was of dazzling whiteness, and glistened like the sea. Clouds were flying over the sky, casting great shadows upon the plain. From scenes like this come those images, so often used in the Bible, of shifting sand and drifting clouds, as emblems of our transient human existence.

At last the camels reached us, and we launched on our new voyage. As we seated ourselves in the saddle, and cast our eyes round the horizon, the character of the country was at once apparent. It is a vast plateau, or tableland, in general outline not unlike one of the steppes of Asia. It is not however an unbroken plain, but crossed by mountain ranges, not so grand as those of the lower part of the Peninsula, but still of considerable height, between which are broad spaces of desert furrowed by water courses. Scarcely had we left the edge of the cliff before we dropped down into one of the gullies by which this vast tract is seamed and scarred, and kept moving on from one to another, as we had traversed a succession of wadies in

going to Sinai. Sometimes we rose on an elevation, from which we took in a more extensive view, and saw mountains in the distance. These smaller hollows worn by streams, like the affluents of a river, finally merge into the Wady el Arish (which we entered in the afternoon), which is to the Desert of the Wandering what the Wady es Scheikh is among the mountains of granite and sandstone, and which bears the great name of the River of Egypt—a term which, as used in the Bible, does not designate the Nile, but this mighty wady, which keeps its course to the sea, coming out near Gaza, and forming the boundary between Egypt and Palestine.

Of course the chief interest of this desolate region is that it is none other than the Great and Terrible Wilderness, in which the Israelites passed all but three of their forty years of wandering. It has always been the tradition, that the march from Egypt to Sinai took about fifty days; and scholars reckon the time of the encampment in the region of Sinai at one year, lacking a few days; when the host of Israel moved northward, and crossing the sandy belt which we passed over yesterday, climbed into this great upland. When they entered it, they could not have intended to remain there, for Moses would not have chosen such a desolate region for a long encampment. They took it on the march to the land promised to their fathers, and advanced nearly through it, when they were driven back by the fierce tribes that inhabited the country. Thus repulsed, they withdrew and pitched their tents in the wilderness, moving from place to place, but never crossing its boundary for more than thirty-seven years, when they turned south to the head of the Gulf of Akaba, and passing round the mountains, came up through Moab, on the east side of the Dead Sea, to Nebo, where Moses died, and from which Joshua, shortly after,

led the tribes across the Jordan. My friend, the Rev. Dr. Hitchcock of New York, President of the Union Theological Seminary, has kindly furnished the following table of the time of the Israelites in their successive journeyings:

	Years.	*Months.*	*Days.*
From Egypt to Sinai	—	1	16
At Sinai	—	11	20
To Kadesh	—	4	10
In the Desert of the Wandering	37	6	—
From Kadesh to Moab	—	10	—
On the plains of Moab	—	2	—

In all, 39 years, 11 months, and 16 days.

This long desert life of the Israelites raises the question, often suggested before, but never so pressing as now, as to the means of their subsistence. How could two millions and a half of people find bread in the wilderness to keep them alive for thirty-seven years? Leaving for the moment the question of the miraculous supply of food, the problem may perhaps be solved in part by considering both the mode of life of the Israelites and the greater fertility of the country at the time of the Exodus in comparison with what it is to-day. The children of Israel were not unaccustomed to the desert. The patriarchs lived on it before they went down into Egypt. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were "dwellers in tabernacles," that is, in tents. They were nomads as truly as the Bedaween of the present day. They lived by their flocks and herds, moving from place to place, wherever they could find pasturage. When Joseph's brethren stood before Pharaoh, and he asked them of their occupation, they said "Thy servants are shepherds." For that reason he appointed them their place of abode not in Memphis, the capital, nor in the other cities of Egypt, but in the land of Goshen, where they could follow their accustomed occupation.

They lived in Goshen, as they had lived on the desert, with their flocks of sheep and herds of cattle; and so when they came to go up out of Egypt, it was the dictate of self-preservation to take their flocks and herds with them as their means of subsistence. For them to go out into the wilderness did not involve the same hardship as it would have been for the Egyptians, for they only went back to the mode of life of their fathers. They pitched their tents on the desert, and once more dwelt in tabernacles, as the patriarchs had done before them. The Exodus for them was simply going back to their old, wandering life.

But how was subsistence found for their flocks and herds? This can only be explained by supposing that the vegetation was much more abundant then than now, of which there is ample proof. In the wadies which we passed through in going to Sinai, there were signs that at one period the mountains, if not covered with forests, yet had by no means the bare look which they now have; while the wadies, which are burnt and dry, may have been as green as the deep valleys that one finds nestled in the recesses of the Alps. All writers bear witness to the constant and suicidal practice which has been going on for centuries among the Arabs, of denuding the mountains, not only of trees but of brushwood, for their camp-fires and to burn for charcoal. This of course has caused the little mountain springs to dry up, and the vegetation to become more scanty. But still with all that man has done to destroy vegetation, there is enough in the wadies and on the hillsides to support flocks of goats; and as we advanced northward, we found large herds of camels spread over the hills. In the wilderness it is not probable that the Israelites were all in one camp. They may have been spread over a tract as large as an English county,

in which were a hundred spots that could yield a temporary sustenance for their flocks and herds. But with all these alleviations of their lot, still the Israelites found this waste over which we are now passing, a Great and Terrible Wilderness. A country in which they could find no abiding place—where they were kept moving from one pasture ground to another, eating up the land before them, and leaving a desolate wilderness behind them; in constant danger, if left to themselves, of perishing by famine or by pestilence—was not a country through which millions of people could make their way unguided and alone. I repeat what I have said before, that the more I see of the desert the more the miracle of the Exodus grows upon me. How the Israelites lived through it, is a mystery which no resources of their own can explain, without the help of Him who was their Guide and Protector. In reading the story of their wanderings, we wonder not that they often fainted, and that their hearts died within them. Forty years! that is more than the lifetime of a generation. In that time old men died, and young men grew old; wives and children were buried in the sands of the desert. What a trial for the wisdom and the firmness of their great leader to keep any control of millions of people, who were at times almost starving, and often in a state of mutiny! Moses himself was sometimes ready to despair; but he withdrew into the wilderness, and alone he knelt upon the rocks or sands, and cried to Heaven for help, and then returned, with new courage in his heart, to inspire the faint and strengthen the weak, and to lead them on, until at last he brought them to the Promised Land.

We camped in the Wady el Arish. It was a bitter night. The wind blew so that we feared it would blow down our tents, and the men had to keep a sharp lookout, driving in the tent-pegs to hold them fast. At the same

time the temperature was almost freezing. The same limestone surface which reflects the sun by day, radiates the heat rapidly as soon as the sun goes down; so that while the days are very hot, the nights are very cold. We have to wrap ourselves up warmly, piling blankets and overcoats upon our camp-beds, and then are sometimes almost frozen. Yet while it required our utmost efforts, even under shelter, to keep our blood stirring, the Arabs slept in the open air, with only their thin covering, and such warmth as they might get from their camp-fires.

The next morning we had a new experience. After weeks of unclouded sky in Egypt and on the desert, it was a relief to see signs of rain. Dark clouds gathered in the west. This we took to indicate our approach to the sea. It was probable that there had been a great storm on the Mediterranean, the skirts of which reached us, although we were still at a distance of perhaps a hundred miles. We had several light showers, which threatened a bad day for marching; yet we were so anxious to press on that we struck our tents and started, keeping along the Wady el Arish, which we left only to enter on a broad plain covered with flint stones, which continued, with occasional intervals, perhaps twenty miles. This flinty desert is quite different from the sandy desert; its surface is as hard as a stone, and the tracks across it seem as if they had been worn by the footsteps of caravans that had passed along the same line for generations.

Notwithstanding the occasional showers, we escaped pretty well in the morning; but in the afternoon the clouds again appeared, yet held off for a time, clinging to a chain of mountains in the west, and we thought we should run the gauntlet in safety. But suddenly, as if they espied the fugitives on the plain, they advanced directly towards us. "Now we are in for it!" said the

Doctor. I dismounted, preferring to meet the enemy on foot. Soon it came. The camels turned their heads to escape the fury of the tempest. It required all the shouting of their drivers to keep their heads to the storm. Thus we struggled on. After an hour the clouds broke away, the sun came out, a rainbow spanned the sky, and we rode on in triumph. And now we had time to admire the strange formation of rocks. These limestone ranges sometimes stretch for miles, suggesting the familiar image of city walls ; and as they are in places much broken, we see cropping up, again and again, the outline of old castles and towers. Here and there upon the plain stands a solitary mound, so like a pyramid that one can hardly believe it has not been fashioned by human hands.

We halted on the top of a hill, in a hollow open only to the sky. All went to work to get the camp ready, the Doctor driving the tent-pegs, and bringing stones to keep them fast, lest we should have such a blow as we had had the night before. In half an hour the tents were up, and all was snug. Better still, our men found a place where they were protected from the wind by rocks, and here they were collected round their fires, with their camels beside them. There were four camp-fires, for we had had an addition to our camp since we left Sinai, in a small party of Bedaween, who were bound to Gaza to bring back grain for the Convent. As it was twelve days march, and led through tribes that might help themselves to whatever the camels carried, they asked to accompany us, that they might be under our protection. We had no objection, for in case of attack their swords and guns would be a welcome addition to ours, and we could combine our forces for the common defence.

I wonder if I can make a picture of the scene around our camp-fires, as I saw it that evening.

The camp-fire is the delight of the Bedaween. No sooner are our tents pitched, and our wants attended to, and the camels fed, than the men scatter about, pulling up little shrubs and brushwood that grow on the desert, which make a quick fire. These they pile on until the ground is thoroughly heated, and they have a glowing bed of coals. Meanwhile one of the Arabs pours out of a sack perhaps a peck of meal upon a piece of coarse cloth, much the worse for wear, and adding a little water and salt, kneads it into a dough, which, when of the proper consistency, is flattened out like a huge pancake, looking very much like the *chipatties* in India. Then the bed of coals is raked open, and the cake laid carefully upon it, and the glowing ashes raked over it. While this is going on, observe the faces of the Arabs gathered round the fire! Every step of the process is watched with eager interest. How their eyes glisten in the firelight! Talk of a dinner prepared by a French cook: it is nothing to the feast of these children of the desert, to which they come with appetites sharpened by hunger. As I watch them night after night, I think how much more they enjoy their supper than we do ours, since they have the pleasure of preparing it as well as of eating it. We, who partake of our meals only when they are placed before us, do not know the exquisite delight of those who enjoy a feast beforehand by witnessing its preparation. This is one of the things which give so keen a zest to gypsy life, and which civilized folk try to imitate in a poor way by getting up a picnic. They find that the same food tastes much better when a whole party are sitting on the grass under a tree, than if it were served on a table. This free outdoor life our Arabs have every day, and their evening meal is one prolonged enjoyment from the time the camp-fire is blazing. We, sitting in our tent, have a regular dinner, with soup and three courses of meat

and vegetables, and a dessert of oranges and figs and almonds and raisins, winding up with a delicious cup of coffee. This is very well; but, after all, we only get one meal, while our poor fellows, whom we pity so, feast all the time that the supper is preparing, and devour it a hundred times with their eyes before they take it into their mouths. By-and-by the heap of coals is opened, and the cake turned over. A few minutes more, and the cooking is complete. What would Charles Lamb, who wrote with such delicious humor of the enjoyment in the cooking as well as the eating of roast pig, say to this feast of the desert? When the loaf comes out, it is certainly well done, though thickly crusted with ashes. However, they do not mind that; but dusting it off with an old rag, proceed to break it up into a pot with some greasy mixture, making the whole a thick porridge. Thus the meal is prepared, and now the circle gathers round it, when a boy comes along with a water-skin, pouring a little on the fingers of all in the group, who then proceed, one after the other, to dip their hands in the dish. How their faces shine as they take the savory mess! When they have scraped the pot with their fingers till not a thimbleful remains, then comes the crown of the feast—what is better to them than any dessert—the pipe! They bring out their chibouques, and fill them, and take long, long drafts —deep inhalations. If any one is so unfortunate as not to have a pipe, or tobacco to fill it, his neighbor, in the true spirit of Oriental hospitality, takes his own pipe from his mouth, and puts it into the mouth of his brother, and thus they rejoice together. All these things combined make a feast which an epicure might envy.

But this is not all. Then begins the flow of conversation, which is the delight of the Bedaween, as of more civilized peoples. The camp-fire on the desert is what the

club is in a city: it is the place of the *conversazione*, where the Arabs tell all the gossip of the camp or the tribe, and discuss the matters of their little world with as much eagerness as the politics of England are discussed in the clubs of London. The amusement which Frenchmen would seek in a theatre, these simple children of the desert find in telling stories, which are often received with shouts of laughter, and which not seldom are continued far into the night. At length the laughter ceases, the fires grow dim, and the Arab

"Wraps the drapery of his couch about him,"

(which consists of his one miserable garment)

"And lies down to pleasant dreams."

"Dreams"! Does the Bedawee ever dream? Yes indeed: why should he not dream? All the riches he possesses lie in the land of dreams. Sleeping on the desert, under the sky, he sees visions and dreams dreams of all which makes the delight of an Arab's existence. That poor fellow who lies there with his head in the sand, is dreaming now of the Oasis of Feiran, of the running brook and the palms that bend over it, and of his companions who watch the flocks of black goats on the mountain side. But whatever his dreams, they do not interrupt his deep, sound slumber. That group round the smouldering camp-fire lie motionless as if in death, yet are ready to spring up at the first streak of dawn.

As the next day was our sixth since we left Mount Sinai, and we wished to be at Nukhl for our camp over Sunday, and feared lest we might be delayed by rain, we started at an early hour, so early indeed that a little after noon we reached the great plain, at the farther end of which we descried the fort. Nukhl is a notable place on the desert, as it is the chief station on the route of pilgrim-

age from Cairo to Mecca, being midway between the Gulfs of Suez and Akaba. Here once in the year is witnessed the most extraordinary spectacle in the world : a train of camels that seems almost endless comes up out of the western horizon, and moves slowly to the east. Vast encampments are pitched around the fort, which was built for this express purpose, to give protection to the pilgrims, and to furnish food and water to them and to their camels. Fifty Egyptian soldiers are quartered here—some of them old soldiers of Ibrahim Pasha—to furnish any protection which is needed, while their families live in a little cluster of mud-houses under the walls of the fort.

If the sight of such a structure (the only building we had seen since we left the Convent at Mount Sinai) was an object of interest to us, no less was the approach of a caravan coming across the desert an object of interest to them. Our arrival put the encampment into commotion. The whole garrison turned out to see us pass, officers and soldiers, and the women of the village, and children too—every mother's son of them was there to behold the advent of the Howadjis. We did not halt to receive their homage, but swept majestically round the fort, and encamped on the northern side.

Hardly had we pitched our tents before the officer in command appeared. He was not a very imposing representative of the military profession. To tell the truth, he was a battered hulk, perhaps the wreck of old wars, but answered well enough for such an out-of-the-way post. He made us many salaams, and invited us to his castle—an invitation with which we speedily complied. In ascending the stairs to his room, we nearly blundered into the harem, which of course caused a little flutter. However, we soon got into the right place, where we sipped our coffee with due satisfaction. The old soldier then took us over the

fort—a rude square building, which can be considered a fortification only by courtesy. It had in the court a single cannon, which is reserved, I suppose, for saluting on great occasions, as when a prince or other grand personage makes the pilgrimage to Mecca. The fort has one provision against a siege in a capacious well, from which the water is drawn up by a wheel and buckets. As this water is not needed for a besieged garrison, it is conveyed by a small aqueduct to large tanks outside the fort, near the northern wall. These tanks seem indeed as if they might furnish water for an army. There is also a well outside, fifty feet deep and about fifty feet in circumference, encircled by a huge trough of stone, from which twenty or thirty camels could drink at once. The next morning the herds were driven in from the desert to fill up the cisterns within them with a supply for days. Here camels bound on the pilgrimage drink to the full before setting out; while their masters, drawing up the water in leathern buckets, which are let down by goat's-hair cords, fill their water-skins for their long march across the desert.

When we had thus inspected the "Fort of Nukhl," and made all sorts of flattering speeches to its gallant commander, we thought we had performed the courtesies of the occasion. But not so the old Colonel. He accompanied us back to our tent. We offered him a chair, but he preferred to squat, like a Turk, on our rugs. We then tried to engage him in conversation, but his resources were not great. Evidently his ideas of the world did not extend beyond Cairo and Constantinople. At length we were at a loss how to entertain a visitor who sat like an Indian sachem in his wigwam, answering only with grunts. We found we had an elephant on our hands. He seemed in no haste to terminate his visit. On the slightest suggestion, he was ready to stay to dinner, or indeed to spend

the night; in fact, he would have taken up his quarters with us over Sunday. We found that Oriental hospitality had its embarrassments as well as its pleasures. We were put to our wits to know how to get rid of this ponderous creature. Of course it must be done with strict regard to courtesy. A happy thought struck us, and we called the dragoman to our relief: "Yohanna, could you not invite the Governor into your quarters?" He took in the situation in an instant, and advancing in the blandest manner, requested the honor of his Excellency's presence in the adjoining tent, to partake of coffee and smoke the chibouque. The temptation was too powerful to be resisted. The old man found his legs, which were curled up somewhere under him, and waddled off. Half an hour after we saw him in the next tent, with wreaths of smoke curling round his head, and a serene self-complacency on his broad features, like a smile on the face of a Chinese idol.

Towards evening a file of soldiers marched down from the fort with military step, and took their places in front of our tents to be our protectors for the night. We bade them welcome, and directed that they be treated with hospitality. They soon made friends with our Arabs, and stacking their guns, are now sitting round the camp-fire, smoking their pipes. Thus guarded by Moslem soldiers, on a spot which is every year overspread with the vast Moslem camp, we sleep to-night, as if we were a couple of dervishes on a pilgrimage to Mecca.

CHAPTER XVI.

NUKHL—ON THE ROUTE OF PILGRIMS TO MECCA.

If some of my countrymen were to spend two days, as we did, at Nukhl, I am afraid they would describe it, with that elegance and felicity of speech which they sometimes employ, as "the most God-forsaken place on the face of the earth." It must be confessed that it has few external attractions. A vast, desolate plain, with not a palm-tree to relieve it; with not even soft sand under your feet, but a surface as hard as if it had been beaten down by the tread of armies, and swept by all the winds of heaven—that is Nukhl! A more bleak and cheerless waste could not be found on the steppes of Siberia, or even in the heart of the Sahara.

And yet there are not many spots to which I have come in my wanderings about the world, which awaken more associations than this same desolate plain. It is the "cross-roads" of two races and two religions—the Hebrew coming up from the South, from Sinai, bearing the Law of God to the land promised for his inheritance; and the Arab coming from the East, with the scimitar in his hand, to carry Islam into Africa. The Hebrew passed, and did not return; but where the Arab passed, the wave of Islam has continued to flow from that day to this. Mahomet was born in 570; the Hegira, or flight from Mecca, from which are reckoned all the dates in the Moslem Calendar, was in 622; and ten years later the Moslems were masters of Egypt, and no doubt established soon after the custom of

an annual pilgrimage to Mecca. The route could be but in one line—a direct course from the head of the Gulf of Suez to the head of the Gulf of Akaba; and it is probable that the conquerors of Egypt fixed the midway station at Nukhl; that they erected the fort, and dug the wells, and built the tanks; and that along this route thus marked out the pilgrimage has flowed and reflowed for more than twelve hundred years.

The custom of making pilgrimages to holy shrines is a very ancient one, and one that came from the East. The Wise Men came from the East to the place of the Saviour's birth. Roman Catholics have introduced the custom into Europe, but its origin is Asiatic. India is the land of pilgrimages. The Prophet did not forget to make use of this powerful means of touching the Oriental imagination, and inspiring Oriental devotion. He himself made pilgrimages to Mecca. Almost the last act of his life was to lead forty thousand pilgrims to that sacred spot. In the eyes of a hundred and fifty (some estimate it at a hundred and eighty) millions, Mecca is the holiest spot on earth. To visit it—to walk round the Kaaba, and kiss the black stone which came from heaven, and to drink of the well Zem Zem—is at once the greatest privilege and honor. To perform this act of devotion invests the pilgrim with peculiar sanctity. Pilgrims come from all parts of the Moslem world. When I crossed the Mediterranean in 1875, there were on board four hundred Circassians from the farther shores of the Black Sea; and when, four months later, I sailed from Singapore to the island of Java, the deck of the little Dutch steamer was crowded with returning pilgrims. Thus they came from the extremes of Western and Southern Asia, to meet at the same holy place in the heart of Arabia.

But the most imposing Moslem pilgrimages are from

Cairo and Damascus. These muster the largest numbers, and are marshalled with the greatest splendor. The departure of the pilgrims from Cairo is the event of the year. They are accompanied out of the city by a military procession, and by a vast multitude mounted on horses and camels. Their return is welcomed with still greater demonstrations. Troops go out to meet them, and escort them into the city; crowds throng the streets through which they pass; the Khedive, surrounded by his officers of state and by thousands of soldiers, awaits their coming; and when the sheikh rides into the public square on the sacred camel, bearing the sacred carpet which for one year has covered the tomb of the Prophet, the bands strike up their most triumphant airs, which are answered by the thunder of cannon from the Citadel.

If such be the splendor of their departure and return, something of this must surround their great encampment on the desert; for of all these caravans moving to and fro, and of this religious enthusiasm rolling between Cairo and Mecca, Nukhl is the centre. Standing in front of the fort, I could not but think what a spectacle it must be when the plain is covered with thousands of pilgrims, of different Oriental races and languages, in the picturesque costumes of the East; and how impressive the scene when, as the sun touches the western horizon, all turn, as by a common instinct, towards Mecca, and bow upon the sands and worship.

With such associations as these, this plain is not altogether desolate. Few things in a country are more suggestive than its roads, especially those which lead to great capitals, and along which sweeps a flood of tumultuous life. The Coliseum itself has not more associations than the Appian Way, over which the legions marched, "bringing many captives home to Rome"; and hardly less inter-

esting is this great highway of the desert, which has been swept by forty generations of pilgrims.

One cannot stand by such a highway, and think to where it leads, without a strong desire to follow it to the end—to Mecca itself! Were it possible to bring that within the range of travel, what would one not give to be able to join a caravan from Cairo or Damascus, and make the great pilgrimage! Of the four holy cities of the world, I have visited Rome and Benares, and am on my way to Jerusalem: Mecca alone is guarded from all eyes but those of the faithful: *that* no Giaour can enter but at the risk of his life. It is said that in a few cases a European, who had lived so long in the East as to have a perfect mastery of Arabic, has disguised himself as a dervish, and mingling with the crowd of pilgrims, has been able to reach Mecca, and come back in safety. But if the disguise were penetrated, and the intruder discovered, he would not return to tell the tale. All we can do, therefore, is to look towards Mecca from a great distance. We can only stand here by the roadside, and in imagination follow the dromedaries as they move away to the East, and disappear below the horizon.

A scene so picturesque touches the Oriental imagination, and is a frequent subject of Arabic poetry. Dr. Post was fond of repeating a stanza from a poem which describes the return from Mecca. It had a very musical sound, and preserves its poetical flavor even in a translation. The lines ran thus:

> And when we had fulfilled every desire in the holy places,
> And all who wished had touched the sacred relics,
> We gathered up the broken threads of our conversation,
> *And the rolling wadies flowed with the necks of camels.*

The exquisite beauty of the last line can only be appreciated by those who have watched a caravan in the dis-

tance, approaching or receding, and observed how the curved necks of the camels, and their long swinging motion, seem literally to flow, as it were, in rhythmic lines or waves, with the undulations of the desert.

But the interest of Nukhl is chiefly of a mournful and melancholy kind: for as the pilgrims appear and vanish, they leave not a trace behind, save in the graves of those who perish in the march. I observed that the plain was covered with low mounds, beneath which, we could not doubt, rested the remains of myriads of pilgrims. Along the route are scattered the skeletons of camels that have fallen by the way, and whose flesh has been devoured by vultures, such as are at this moment flying over the plain, looking for new victims. On the horizon is a range of low limestone hills, which are said to be the haunt of the wolf and the hyena, which sometimes creep down into the plain to find water. I could not resist the horrible thought that the famished beasts sometimes tore open the graves to make a banquet of the dead.

As we think of these pilgrims, who left their bones in the wilderness, we are reminded that this broad track in the desert has been the royal road of Death for more than a thousand years. Mecca has been the very nest and breeding-place of those diseases which are the scourges of Asia—the cholera and the plague—which have been carried there by pilgrims from all parts of Asia and Africa, and which returning pilgrims have brought with them and scattered over the world. Side by side with the returning caravans, keeping company with them, has travelled an unseen Pilgrim, advancing along this very route, as if it were his own king's highway, from Asia into Africa, and ravaging the shores of the Mediterranean, has at last carried consternation to Western Europe. Again and again has there been weeping, not only in the low quarters of populous cities,

but in high halls and in kings' palaces, because of the scourge which has come along this route from Mecca. Of those who fell on the desert, tens of thousands lie beneath the mounds which are scattered far and wide over the plain of Nukhl. Here they sleep, with no stone to record their names, or even to mark the spot—their only requiem the winds of the desert.

The winds of the desert! That sound is the most melancholy of all the voices of nature. It is not like the sound of the wind in a forest of pines, or on the shore where it mingles with the moaning of the sea—for there is life in the forest and in the sea, life in the swinging boughs and the dashing waves—but in the wind of the desert there is a hollow sound, for it comes over a world all silent and still, as over a world of the dead, and seems to be wailing like a lost spirit over innumerable graves.

But Nukhl had another interest to us, as the point in our journey where we had to make an entire change of men and camels for our further march. We were now to have an illustration of Bedaween customs. Here we entered the territory of another tribe, the Tayyahah, which claimed the sole right to levy tribute on travellers who passed through their country. We knew of this Arab usage, and for days had been looking forward to the change with the utmost regret. Ever since we left Suez we had had the same men; they had been with us in long and weary marches, and more docile, patient, and willing servants we could not desire, and we were very unwilling to part with such faithful companions. They too were equally reluctant to part from us, whom they had found kind and indulgent masters, and were willing to divide what they should receive with the new tribe if they might be permitted to accompany us. But the Bedaween of Nukhl were inexorable. They would allow our men to pass through their

territory (as indeed they *did*, going on to Gaza to bring back supplies for the Convent), but they must not carry us. To furnish guides and camels for travellers was the special privilege and perquisite of the tribe in whose territory we were, which they would not surrender. If our men had attempted to force their way, there would have been a pitched battle. Of course there was nothing to do but to submit. But it was a real sorrow to us to say farewell to our gentle and simple Tawarah.

Seeing it was inevitable, we wished to do something to soften the pain of separation. Dr. Post, who knew the hearts of the Bedaween, had conceived, "in the recesses of a mind capacious of such things," the idea of a grand stroke which should cause us to be forever remembered by our companions, and to be blessed in their tribe. It was to buy a sheep and give it to them to roast whole and make a feast. "But what," I asked, "can they do with a whole sheep?" "They will not leave a mouthful; they will pick the last bone," was the answer. It is so seldom that the poor fellows get a "square meal" that when it comes they do it full justice. Of course I was delighted, and enjoyed in advance their surprise and amazement at this unexpected feast. But alas for our generous intentions! "To cook a hare you must first catch it." There was not a sheep to be had in all the country round for love or money. So we had to abandon our brilliant design and content ourselves with giving a very liberal backsheesh.

And now came the negotiations for another party. The sheikh of the tribe presented himself immediately on our arrival. As soon as he appeared, the large heart of Yohanna swelled within him; he fell on the neck of the Arab and kissed him. Their love was like the love of David and Jonathan. Who that saw these brothers folded in each

other's arms could imagine that in a few hours one would be trying to cheat the other, while the latter would be writhing, not in embraces, but in toils from which he could not escape? The matter was one of some difficulty. A regular contract had to be made, as we had made one before in Cairo. The only difference was that, as we had contracted with our dragoman to take us the whole journey, it was *his* business to contract with the sheikh. But of course we had to stand behind him and see him through. This obliged us to be present at a scene of which we were unwilling witnesses. As we were trying to get a little rest in our tent, we were summoned to the fort. Our dragoman was in trouble. We found him surrounded by a dozen or twenty Bedaween, who were putting him through a course of torture. The more he writhed under it the more they increased their exactions. At first they asked ten pounds above the regular price, then twenty, and finally thirty pounds! Poor Yohanna was in despair. Being of an excitable temperament, he was driven to frenzy by these repeated demands, and for a moment lost all self-control; his face was swollen with rage, his eyes were full of tears, and I thought he would tear the hair out of his head, and gave him one anxious look, but a glance reassured me, his hair was very short. But tears and entreaties were in vain: the Arabs knew that we could not stir a step without their camels and their guides, and were determined to profit by our necessities. Our friend the old Governor did not once interpose to rescue us from their rapacity. Instead of using his authority to protect us, he looked on grinning and smiling, and evidently enjoyed the scene. Of course it was useless to contend against such combined forces, and, ignominious as it seemed, we advised the dragoman to capitulate, to make an unconditional surrender, and to get the best terms he

could. He took our advice, accepted the terms and entered into a formal contract with the sheikh, who engaged to furnish the requisite number of camels and guides, and to convoy us safely to Gaza in six days. The contract was duly signed and sealed, and was from that moment binding—so far as anything could bind these wild men of the desert.

Perhaps some may think we felt great anger and indignation at the sheikh and his comrades who cheated us so roundly. On the contrary, we thought ourselves extremely fortunate that they had not cheated us still more. We had fallen among thieves, and they acted after their kind. They might have asked us a hundred pounds too much instead of thirty—or five hundred, for that matter—and we could not have helped ourselves. We were completely in their power; to use the slang of the Stock Exchange, they had "a corner" on us, and we were but too happy to get off so easily.

After this disagreeable business it was a relief to get away from such company and go off by ourselves, like Isaac, to meditate at eventide, when, as if to add to the peace of the hour and the quiet beauty of the scene, there hung in the west a new moon. Last evening we had seen only the stars, in which we recognized the familiar constellations of our Northern Hemisphere, the only objects that are familiar on the desert or on the sea. But to-night we had the first glimmer of the young moon. We had had the full moon at Serbal, as we shall have the Paschal moon at Jerusalem; but here, midway between the two, we have only the half light of that pale and slender crescent. It seemed a singular coincidence that we should have the sign of Islam hanging over the place of the great Moslem camp.

The next morning, though we started at an early hour,

the old Governor was on hand to take leave of us, and hung round in a way that was very suggestive. We knew what he was after, for, like all Arabs, he had an itching palm. But, as he had not helped us in our difficulty, we resolved to teach him a lesson. His devotion, however, nearly overcame our resolution. He was ready to give his life for us. He declared that he would take the field in person, at the head of his soldiers, and march by our side, to guard us from the dangers of the way. But the Doctor was not deceived by these professions, and whispered "Don't give him anything!" To his grimaces and protestations we replied with thanks. He bowed and smiled, and we bowed and smiled. But he looked very blank when he saw us mount our camels, with not a single napoleon left in his hand, and I have no doubt, returned disgusted to his castle.

And now we were to make the acquaintance of our new set of retainers. We found that the change was complete; that in taking Arabs of another tribe, we took a very different set of men—men of a different physique, larger and stronger, and of a less gentle aspect than our late companions; and before we were through with them, we found that they differed as much in character as in looks; that they answered much more to our idea of the real Bedaween of the desert. Among them was an old soldier of Ibrahim Pacha, who carried a rusty sword by his side in token of his military profession, and who, before we reached the end of our journey, showed that, in spite of his years, he had the fiery spirit and the courage of a soldier. Another carried one of those long guns, made at Damascus, which are the pride of the Bedaween, though we could not think much of its efficiency, for it was plugged up at the muzzle, and the lock swathed with bandages like a mummy, so that it seemed as if it must take a quarter of an hour before it

could be unlimbered for action. We wished to relieve the bearer of his burden, and asked him to give it to one of the mounted men to sling on his saddle ; but no, he must have it always in his hand, in case we were attacked by wild beasts (!) or by robbers!! These intimations of danger rather amused us, for we saw no lion in our path, and the wolves and hyenas that lurked in the hills were not fierce enough to attack anything more formidable than a dead camel ; and as for robbers, we travelled in the Desert of the Wandering five days without meeting a single man! However, we found before we reached Gaza that our Arab knew better than we, and that there were real dangers before us, against which it was necessary to be on our guard.

The leader of the party was the old sheikh, a somewhat notable personage, of whom I shall speak hereafter.

The camels also were new to us, and with them we had to become acquainted. They too, like their masters, were of another breed than those we had had before. In place of my young dromedary, I had given to me a camel of much larger stature, to whose back I could hardly reach. To mount such a huge beast seemed like climbing a church steeple, and sitting on the vane. However, if she was not handsome, she was good. I found her a quiet creature, that carried me without a murmur over the long stretches of sandy plain. Indeed she was of a gentleness quite unusual among camels, and one that almost required explanation. I learned that, a month before, she had become the mother of a little camel that died, and this sorrow seemed to be in her maternal heart, and to cause her to be in a very sad, and yet very tender, mood. The cameleer who led her was her owner—probably his only possession in the world—and even when not leading her, walked by her side, and never wearied of caressing her. He would

stroke her gently, and now and then would swing her long neck round and kiss her huge black lips. Sometimes I observed him putting his hand under her, and making it a cup, press into it a little of her milk, which he put as a precious draught to his lips. Once, as a great honor, he brought me a glass of camel's milk, which I found not unpleasant, though I prefer the milk of our little Jerseys. Of such a creature one could not help becoming fond. As we got better acquainted, she allowed me to pet her, to ruffle the fur on her neck, as one scratches the head of a parrot, and would kneel or rise at my bidding.

Dr. Post was less fortunate. He had given to him a camel that ought to have been a means of grace to him, for certainly she would have been a trial to any man. Oh, but she was a growler! She would grumble on the slightest provocation, or on none at all. If he turned her this way or that, no matter how gently, or if he did not touch the halter, but let her take her own way, it made no difference. If we reined up to have a little quiet talk as we rode along, this vicious old creature was sure to take part in the conversation; and if her rider tried to hush her, she would lift up her voice the louder. She was one of those bores that will not be suppressed; and if her master finally lost patience, and gave her the beating that she deserved, she set up a terrible roaring. That camel was a beast! Human nature, however cross-grained, could not have been worse.

Thus mounted and guarded, we set out on our march, just as the sun was rising over the desert. At first we directed our course to the East, which we could not understand, for it seemed as if we were following nearly in the track of the pilgrimage to Mecca, but presumed that the sheikh who was our guide, like an old mariner, was making a little "Easting" to strike into some broad wady,

when he would turn to the North—a conjecture which proved true, as in a few hours we struck again into the great Wady el Arish. After miles of weary march, we saw before us another wall of mountains, which we did not cross, but kept in view as we moved along the bed of the "River of Egypt."

Our course to-day led over great flint-covered plains. It was indeed "a dry and thirsty land where no water is," and yet all round us shone crystal lakes, only they were always out of reach, and had we advanced towards them we might have gone on forever. It was our first sight of the mirage. Observing it closely, it seemed as if it were a phenomenon very easy of explanation; that it was caused by the vibration of the heated air near the surface of the desert, which produced an illusion like that from the reflection of the sun on rippling water. Studied merely as a wonder of nature, as we study the rainbow, it was a beautiful object, but what a mocking fiend it must be to those whom it lures on and on, only to perish at last. To one dying of thirst there could hardly be a more cruel torture than this gleam of water in the distance.

Towards evening we came near mountains which, to the eye of the Doctor, resembled those of Palestine. Thus almost every day something looms up on the horizon which reminds one or the other of mountain scenery or coast scenery which is familiar. The desert, while it is like the sea in its vast expanse, is different in this, that it is a sea with the coast always in sight. I do not remember ever having been "out of sight of land." There is always at least a range of low hills on the horizon, which sometimes rise to mountains, and recall mountains that we have seen in other parts of the world. Often we seem to be sailing along a rugged coast, and can easily imagine ourselves off the west coast of Ireland, or sailing up St.

George's Channel, with the mountains of Wales in sight, or along the southern shore of the Isle of Wight. This evening, while the mountains to our left were in deep shadow, the setting sun, striking across the open plain before us, fell on a long range of cliffs on our right, the effect of which was heightened by the mirage, which made them seem as if they rose out of water, and thus reminded me of the chalk cliffs of Dover, while isolated cliffs, standing out here and there, might easily be imagined a fleet of line-of-battle ships bearing down the Channel. Yet this is the route to Palestine by Nukhl, which "presents no object of interest to the traveller"!

CHAPTER XVII.

THE OLD SHEIKH—ILLNESS ON THE DESERT.

We had set out from Nukhl with the determination to reach Gaza by the end of the week at any cost, even if it were necessary to make forced marches for the purpose. We were now in a region where we were liable to storms, that might render it impossible for a whole day, or a series of days, to stir from camp; and in apprehension of such delays, we determined to make the most of clear weather. So we rose early, starting soon after sunrise, and kept on till nearly dark. This caused a grumbling among the men, the sound of which soon came to our ears. We found our new Arabs were not so tractable as the old ones. Their plan was directly opposed to ours: instead of starting early and camping late, they preferred to start late and camp early. They would like to take it leisurely, starting at eight or nine o'clock, and going into camp at three or four; and when they saw us striding ahead, and thus forcing them to follow, they began to murmur among themselves, and from murmurs proceeded to threats. So much did they work upon the fears of the dragoman, that he lost his head, and came to us in a panic of terror to tell us that "if we pressed the men so hard, they would leave us and go home." This was not a light danger to look in the face. Had they executed such a threat, we should have been like men in an open boat in mid-ocean. We should have had to walk a hundred miles (not even knowing the way) without food or water, with a good chance of leaving

our bodies on the desert, a prey to vultures and hyenas. Such a spirit had to be stamped out on the instant. The suggestion roused Dr. Post, gentle as he is, and he turned fiercely upon the dragoman: "Yohanna, what do you mean by talking to the men in this way, or listening to them? The trouble is not with them: it is with *you*—with your miserable cowardice! Go about your business, and look after the tents and the baggage, and leave the men to me. I know the Arabs, and I will take care of them." Yohanna slunk off to the rear of the train, but for several days he was in mortal fear lest we should be left like a shipwrecked crew in the middle of the ocean.

Having silenced the dragoman, the Doctor turned to the sheikh, and to dispose him to favor these long marches, addressed him in quite another fashion, enlarging on the number of his camels, which made him a man of great consideration on the desert. He then drew upon his imagination for a picture of myself, using well-flavored Oriental language. He described me as a personage of great distinction, a sort of prince in disguise (very much in disguise), who was abroad in quest of knowledge, and who it was very desirable should carry away high impressions of his country, and who (this was thrown in incidentally), whatever his affluence or generosity, might, if disappointed or delayed in his progress, be less princely in his gifts than he would otherwise be! At the suggestion of backsheesh, the old sheikh grew attentive and almost devout, and at length answered with great solemnity, as if he had screwed up his mind to the highest pitch of resolution, and only needed Divine assistance, "We have leaned upon God"!

This sheikh was quite a character. His mixture of pious phrases with craft and cunning, his fervent appeals to Heaven while keeping an eye on the main chance, made him a good representative of his race. But for an

Arab, he was not unintelligent. He knew the desert as the mariner knows the sea, and gave us much information about the state of his people. "How do you manage to live here on the desert?" was one of our first inquiries. "Well," answered the sheikh, "we make a few grindstones, and burn a little charcoal, and if a man raises two or three camels, he sells them." "But, does not the government pay you for the protection you give to the pilgrims who camp at Nukhl on their way to Mecca?" "The government pay anything?" said the old man, and his eyes flashed as he answered bitterly: "The government would take the grave-clothes off from the dead! It pays for nothing, but takes everything."

Few of the Arabs can read and write. Yet in proportion to their ignorance, is their reverence for what is written or printed, which has to them such a superiority to their own degree of knowledge as to be almost sacred in their eyes. Thus when a question arose as to where we must camp for the night, Dr. Post appealed to the map in the guide-book. But the sheikh shook his head; it was quite impossible for him to comprehend how the relations of dark lines on a map corresponded to the relations of mountains, wadies, and plains. He did not know; it might be so; but he could not understand it. "But," said the Doctor with the tone of a man who produces an argument which settles the matter, "is anything that is printed in a book a lie?" "No, indeed," said the old man with a simplicity of faith delightful to witness, "God forbid!"

One evening as they were sitting round the camp-fire, Dr. Post took the opportunity to ask about the laws of hospitality among the Bedaween. He said: "If your tribe was at war with another tribe, and you were to meet one of that tribe alone on the desert, how would you treat

him?" "That would depend on how he came to us. If he came as an enemy, we should treat him as an enemy. If he raised his spear, we should attack him, and perhaps kill him or make him prisoner. But if he threw himself upon our hospitality, we should do him no harm; but, on the contrary, we would defend him and protect him, and conduct him in safety to the border of his tribe, and let him depart in peace."

When the Doctor came and reported to me this conversation, I felt that now at last we had found what Diogenes looked for with his lantern—a man! (I was ready to forget how he took advantage of us in the contract at Nukhl, and to think only of the present display of virtue.) Here was an untutored child of nature, who had never felt the restraining influences of civilization, and who yet, out of the fountain of goodness within him, was imbued with the noblest sentiments that could inspire the human breast. If he was not a Christian, he was the highest type of Moslem, having the natural instincts of justice, with the added virtue of hospitality prescribed by his religion.

After this it was a little discouraging to hear the dragoman say that this same old sheikh was himself a notorious robber, and had helped himself to the property of others to such good purpose that he was now the possessor of two hundred camels! "Did you not see those camels on the hills as you approached the camp? They all belong to him, and are in great part spoil which he has thus obtained." I knew that the wealth of the desert was in camels. Whan a man has twenty or thirty, his great desire is *more camels!* He sells off some of the males, and keeps the females for breeding. If that does not supply him fast enough, he can replenish his herd by a judicious raid into the territory of his neighbor. But to think that

our virtuous old sheikh could thus enrich himself! Yet that very evening, at another of the camp-fires where we were not present, he boasted that several years before he had executed a great raid towards Mecca, as the fruit of which he brought back some forty camels! This was a pilgrimage to Mecca to some profit. In his view this was the great achievement of his life.

These marauding expeditions are the chief excitement of the desert, and a source of perpetual fighting between different sheikhs and different tribes. A man who makes a business of robbing must of course take the chances of war, and not complain if now and then he is robbed himself. He who does not hesitate to kill, must take his chances of being killed. We had at hand this very moment an illustration of the blood feud. Just now Dr. Post rode up, and said that his cameleer had an affair of honor on his hands. A few days since his brother was with others tending a herd of camels which had been driven to pasturage ground south of Hebron, when a party from another tribe, probably from near the Dead Sea, came upon them, and stole the camels, and killed his brother. Now his only thought is of revenge. As soon as he returns from being with us, he will muster some of his clan, and set out to make a raid in return. He will hope to recover his camels, but his one object in life will be to kill somebody in revenge for his brother!

When we heard that our own sheikh was a robber, we were grieved to the heart, as when one learns something to the reproach of a well-beloved friend: for had we not sat at his camp-fire, and taken sweet counsel together? Such a disappointment was calculated to shake our faith in human nature. Our ideal was destroyed; our idol was cast down to the ground. As Washington said after the treason of Arnold, "Whom can we trust now?" so could

we say, How can we ever believe again in an Arab sheikh as a model of virtue?

The next morning, as if to show how virtue (!) is rewarded in this world, there came by our tent at sunrise a great herd of camels, which belonged to our friend the sheikh, and were the reward of his "industry"! They were being driven to new pastures, having exhausted their late grounds. It was a very picturesque sight. There were camels of all sizes and all ages, large and small, old and young—some were very young, mere babies. I observed that the old camels had large humps, and was told that when they are not used, but are left at pasture, their humps increase in size. They were accompanied by their herdsmen, who were all dressed in sheepskins, like the shepherds on the Campagna around Rome. Following on soon after, we overtook them as they were roaming over the hills. I think the sheikh had a new saddle-beast brought to him to ride, for he suddenly appeared mounted on a young, swift dromedary. While we were moving along at a slow and solemn pace, he dashed up at full speed, and rode by as if in a charge of battle. His legs and feet were bare, but he had on a red tunic under his coarse goat's-hair cloak, and there was a touch of finery in the housings of his saddle. He presented quite a military figure, with his gun slung behind his back, and his pistol in his belt, as he rode by at full gallop, and disappeared over the crest of a hill. As he passed, I observed sticking up behind him what I took to be a sheep's head, but what proved to be a little camel, born only the day before, which he had slung by his saddle, and carried off, while the poor mother followed behind, lowing and groaning mournfully. As the whole herd was on a day's march to find pasture, and as this new-born baby could not walk, it was thus carried. After a time the sheikh

took it out of the sack, and put it on the ground, when the poor mother nursed it with great satisfaction.

These little camels were a great amusement to us. We had one in our camp but a few weeks old, the offspring of one of our saddle-beasts, that followed its mother all the way to Gaza, six days march. Like the young of all animals, it had a certain prettiness that did not belong to the huge form of the full-grown camel. But it had none of the fun and frolic of a young colt. The solemnity of that little creature was overpowering. Once or twice the Doctor tried to stir it up to play, but it made no response to these attentions, except to rise up slowly and move off a few paces, as if in silent protest against such familiarities. He gave it up, concluding that the love of fun and play was wholly wanting in the camel, whose "moral nature" seems to be subdued to the endless monotony of the desert.

The following day the sheikh left us with many salaams and benedictions. After cheating us all he could, he gave us his blessing, like some men that are not Bedaween. It was truly delightful, after we had been robbed, to have the man who had robbed us willing to part on the best of terms, hoping to meet us again, and renew our pleasant relations! We were touched by the assurance of his distinguished consideration. The old man wished us Peace: what more could we ask? He gave us his blessing: may it do us good! *

* My recollection of two notable personages who appear in these pages—the Sheikh of the tribe of the Tayyahah and the Governor of Nukhl—has been quickened by recent intelligence, which renders it quite probable that both were concerned in the massacre of Professor Palmer and his party, an event which has created such a profound feeling in England, on account of the character of the men who suffered this terrible fate. Edward Henry Palmer was one of the first Oriental scholars in England. In the University of Cambridge he was

As we were getting farther North, the country was not so utterly uninhabited. Now and then we descried in the distance a party of Bedaween, mounted on their camels, coming toward us at full sail. As they came up out of the horizon, like ships out of the sea, Dr. Post would exclaim "There come the Midianites!" for indeed I suppose these men of the desert, in race and costume, as in the

a Professor of Arabic, of which he was master, besides being familiar with other languages of the Farther East, translating poems from the Persian, and reading and speaking Hindustanee. He had made a special study of the Peninsula of Sinai, having been with the Survey Expedition in 1868–'69, and also in charge of an exploring party in the Desert of the Wandering, and the South Country, and Moab, in 1869–'70. The result of his explorations was a work of great value on "The Desert of the Exodus." He was well known to the sheikhs and the tribes on the desert. So familiar indeed had his face become that he bore the name of Sheikh Abdallah. Probably it was this familiarity with the country and its inhabitants which gave him confidence that he could go anywhere with safety, and thus led him into such peril and to death. Soon after the commencement of the present war, he offered his services to the English Government to make a journey into the interior. It is said that he was going to Nukhl to meet the sheikh; and that he took with him three thousand pounds for the purchase of camels, to be used for transportation by the Indian Contingent that was to arrive at Suez; and which, instead of joining the English troops at Ismailia, was to execute a separate movement across the desert to Cairo. Whatever his purpose, it was a rash undertaking to venture among these fierce tribes at a moment when they were greatly excited by the war. He was accompanied by two officers, Capt. Gill and Lieut. Charrington, who had had experience in such expeditions. But their enterprise was soon to come to an end. They had made but a single day's march from the Wells of Moses to Wady Sudr, the place of our first encampment on the desert. From this wady a pass leads through the mountain range towards Nukhl, which probably Professor Palmer was to take. As the party reached this camping-ground, they found the

beasts they rode, were not very unlike the Midianites who bought Joseph of his brethren and sold him into Egypt. We met also several parties of the Tawarah tribe returning from Gaza, loaded with grain, two sacks to a camel, each sack containing several bushels. Their appearance was such as we suppose that of the sons of Jacob to have been when they went down into Egypt to buy corn.

Bedaween gathering around them in dangerous numbers, threatening an attack. But as it was dark, and the Arabs did not know what force the English had, they threw a cordon round them, and waited until morning, when, seeing how few they were, they went in and took them prisoners, and conducted them to a rough place in the mountains, to the edge of a precipice, and gave them their choice—to throw themselves over or be shot. It is said that Prof. Palmer—who is described as a shy, timid man, with the look of the Professor that he was, spectacled and nervous—covered his face with his hands, and took the fatal leap; while Capt. Gill and Lieut. Charrington, with the instinct of soldiers, chose to be shot, and fell with their face to the foe. Their bodies were then thrown over the precipice.

This terrible affair was for some time unknown; but as no report was received from the expedition, alarm began to be felt, and Col. Warren, with a force large enough for its own protection, was sent in search. The fate of the missing party was soon learned, as the bodies of the murdered men were found in the ravine below the precipice where they perished. It is said that Col. Warren found the desert full of hostility; that scouts and messengers whom he sent out were killed; and that his own party was threatened with attack. Among their important discoveries was a letter of the Governor of Nukhl, proving that he gave the order for the massacre! From my very vivid recollection of the old wretch who commanded the fort, as well as of the crafty sheikh into whose hands we fell, I am not at all surprised at the report that both were concerned in it. If this be proved, it is to be hoped that they and all the leaders will be taken and executed. Without a punishment severe enough to strike awe into the tribes, English and American travellers will hardly dare to make the trip across the desert.

Probably they took the old caravan route from Syria to Egypt—a journey that need not have taken more time than the twenty-four days now required for the camel's pace from Sinai to Gaza and back again.

It is one of the chief pleasures of this desert travelling, that it brings before us so vividly the mode of life of patriarchal times: for the world does not change on the desert, and men live now as they lived thousands of years ago. Abraham was a sheikh—not in character like the one from whom we have just parted, but in appearance perhaps not unlike a sheikh who may be seen now and then, aged and venerable, with long and snowy beard falling on his breast. He was a prince of the desert, rich in camels and asses, and flocks and herds, and men-servants and maid-servants. The custom by which he held his servants is the same which exists to-day. One of the men that accompanied us from Nukhl was a black who belonged to the sheikh—yet not a slave, as the dragoman was careful to explain, but "a servant born in his house," and entitled by usage, if not by written law, to certain privileges, which date from the earliest times.

While we were thus on the march, making our observations, and our comparisons of that which now is with that which has been, we had other experiences of a serious character to which I must refer, if it were only as a lesson and warning to future travellers. If these descriptions of life on the desert should lead others to follow me, I must insist that they take the utmost precautions: for while the journey is one of extraordinary interest, it is also one of very great fatigue. The fatigue alone would be nothing, if one could lie down after a day's march, and get thoroughly rested. But on the desert the pressure is incessant to keep moving. There is no spot that invites to rest; no quiet wayside inn, no cooling

shade, attracts the weary traveller. Herein lies the danger, that this succession of forced marches will finally bring on utter exhaustion. To this danger we were especially exposed, from the long route we took. Merely to go from Suez to Sinai and return, is comparatively easy: for that is but six days either way, and the traveller can rest at Sinai a week if he chooses before he begins his homeward march. But when the time of the return journey is doubled, the exposure is quadrupled; for the process of exhaustion goes on in a compound ratio, and is very likely to end in illness, which in this helpless situation, utterly separated from all chance of relief, at once becomes a serious matter. I had once had a narrow escape. The day after the ascent of Serbal, I was completely used up, and that night was threatened with fever; and now Dr. Post, who was so wiry and active, and who seemed incapable of fatigue, was in danger of breaking down.

On the second day after leaving Nukhl, we attempted a forced march, starting at six o'clock, so that by eleven we had done what we ought to have been satisfied with doing by noon. We had been five hours in the saddle, and had done the half of a full day's work. I then observed for the first time the Doctor's spirits flag. He dismounted, and threw himself under a juniper bush with a look of exhaustion that I had never seen in him before, and told me to ride on, and that he would soon join me. I thought my place was beside him under that juniper bush. Could our friends at home have seen us at that moment, they would have felt an anxiety which they were happily spared, since they did not hear of it till it was all over.

After an hour and a half, we started again, riding and walking by turns till a little after four o'clock, when we

came to a beautiful spot for a camp. As soon as we were off the camels, the Doctor took shelter under a large bush till the baggage train should come up. It always seemed to move very slowly when we were waiting impatiently for it. As soon as the tents were pitched, he lay down on his cot with an expression of utter weariness. He was very hot, and could take only a glass of lemonade to cool the fever that seemed to be burning in his veins. When dinner was served, he took a little soup, and went directly to bed. I covered him up, and tried to perform the part of nurse as well as I could, yet all the while feeling most painfully my utter helplessness.

That night I was in great anxiety: for the bare possibility of an illness on the desert was enough to awaken the most serious apprehensions. Had I been the sick one, my companion was an experienced and skilful physician, and would know what to do. He too could speak Arabic, and could give directions to our men. I had just as much knowledge of medicine as of Arabic—that is to say, I knew nothing of either—while the dragoman and cook were as ignorant as the Bedaween themselves. The only possible hope of relief would be to send to Gaza, which was four days' march. Four days there and four days back—eight days—that would seem like an eternity while waiting on the desert. In that time all our supplies of food would be exhausted, so that we should be in danger of dying by starvation, if we did not by fever. We were in a spot where we could not get a drop of water for ourselves or our camels. One shudders to think what might happen in such a time! But thanks to the sick man's skilful treatment of himself, the night passed with no increase of fever.

The next morning we did *not* strike our tents at sunrise, and yet somehow that hour always gave me a touch of

fever—a fever to which I am subject, the fever of impatience. Nothing chafes me like forced inaction. After walking out to look at the clouds, which were threatening, I returned to the tent to find my friend still very weak. What should be done? Should he rest here for the day, or make a start, even if he could go only a short distance? At last he rose heavily and wearily, and bracing himself with a strong dose of quinine, mounted his camel. As soon as he was in the saddle, his spirits began to rise. The fresh air and the motion gave him new life. But what relieved my fears was to see his old passion for flowers kindle at the sight of some new specimens which he could gather for his collection of the Flora of the Desert. He could not resist the attraction of a new plant, and I verily believe, if he had been *in articulo mortis*, that the sight of a new flower brought to his bedside would have caused a smile of satisfaction to spread over his dying features. Of course I took courage from seeing him revive, and from the rebound of feeling, entered with new joy into the scenes that opened before us. As we rose upon a ridge that divided two wadies, there was a view of mountains in the distance that was so striking that I reined in my camel to take a long and steady look, and then called the cameleer to hold her till I could put down some notes, as an artist takes a hurried sketch of a scene which he fears will escape him forever. Many of the notes here written out were thus taken on the back of my camel. If they have any merit, it is because they were taken on the spot, and reproduce, as nearly as it is in my power to do it, the exact scenes and impressions of the moment.

At noon we halted beside a spring, which is supposed by some explorers to be the Fountain of Hagar, perhaps because it is the only one found in the region. It was the first time we had seen a drop of water since we left Nukhl,

and this was the third day's march. The mere suggestion is a touching one: for in all the mournful tales of the desert, none is sadder than the story of Hagar, driven from the tent of Abraham, and fleeing with her child into the wilderness, and there ready to perish with thirst, when saved by a spring that burst forth in the sand, perhaps the same which was now bubbling up at our feet.

This afternoon we passed over a succession of barren hills, the very abomination of desolation. But no matter, every step that we take brings us nearer home! Already my friend sees, though afar off, the signs of change. When he first came upon the squill plant, he could not restrain his excitement. "That plant," he said, "is never found except near the sea, or at least within the reach of the salt air. We are approaching the Mediterranean. It may be yet fifty or sixty miles off, but we are getting near it." How delightful is this enthusiasm of the man of science, which can make him forget illness and the fatigues of the desert!

But here the enthusiasm of the botanist outwent the strength of the man, and that night when we reached camp, after ten hours' march, I feared he would break down utterly. There was a deep sadness in his tone as he said: "If I am not better to-morrow, I cannot move." I never passed a night of greater anxiety in my life. All the horrors of the situation came upon me. I imagined myself arriving at Gaza *alone*, obliged to telegraph to Beirut and to Florence that my companion had died on the desert! These may seem wild imaginings, born of anxiety and fear; but let any man be thus alone with a sick friend in the heart of the desert, and see if his thoughts are not as black as the midnight above his tent.

The morning found him in no condition to move. "If I were at home," he said, "I should not only not leave my

house, I should not leave my bed." The day opened dark and dreary; there were clouds all round the horizon, and a storm seemed to be coming on. Under that lowering sky, to put a sick man on a camel for a day's march seemed like madness, and yet there was almost equal danger in lingering here. We had to decide promptly. Bad as the case was, I insisted that we must start and go as far as we could. I do not think he would have raised his head from the pillow that day if he had not seen the look on my face. But seeing in me something which seemed to speak of a desperate necessity, he rose up once more as if to take his last ride. How he went through that day, I can only explain by this, that on the desert, as on the sea, men "cry unto the Lord in their troubles, and He bringeth them out of their distresses."

All the morning we were looking for rain. By the rules of storms it *ought* to have rained. The Doctor proved it, (a man of science is nothing if not scientific,) for he had a perfect theory of storms. He took the map, and showed how the hot air of Africa, coming from the Sahara, strikes the Mediterranean, and drinks up clouds full of rain, which descend on the neighboring coasts. We were now in the rainy belt, and by good right it should, would, and must rain. So we should have had it if the elements had done their duty. I rallied him pleasantly for his confident prediction, too happy if I could bring a smile on his dear, sad face. For my part, I preferred to walk by faith *and* sight, instead of theory, and not flee before the storm until it came; and as a kind Providence would have it, in an hour or two the sky cleared, and we had a beautiful day, all the better for the clouds that tempered the heat of the sun.

And now at last we were rewarded for our perseverance in the march. The character of the country changed. We

were coming up out of the desert: we were getting nearer the sea. These great ridges of sand are the *dunes* of a sea coast. Indeed the dear Doctor traced them farther—to the same Sahara which is the source of storms, from which they are blown into the sea, and carried along by currents setting eastward to the southern bend of the coast of the Mediterranean, where, washed up on the shore and dried by the sun, they are again lifted by the winds, and borne thus far into the interior.

In the afternoon we came into a broad land, not cut up by narrow wadies—a wide, open, rolling country, of long sweeps and gentle undulations, that might be as beautiful as the breezy downs of England, if only these were clothed with vegetation. That too increases: it is more to-day than since we entered the Desert of the Wandering. Flowers bloom more abundantly. The eye of my friend gleamed with pleasure as he caught sight of the lily, or asphodel, and of the Star of Bethlehem. We are now fairly in the South Country, the portion of Canaan set apart to the tribe of Simeon, where, although the patches of cultivation are as yet few and scattered, there is good pasture-ground for flocks and herds. And so He who led the Israelites across the Great and Terrible Wilderness, has now, over the same burning desert, brought two weary pilgrims to the borders of the Promised Land.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PERILS AMONG ROBBERS.

Ever since we left Nukhl, we had had occasional hints from our dragoman that by-and-by we should get into a region in which it might not be quite as smooth sailing as on the desert, where we had seen no man in five days. But as he was a timid and fearful soul, we attached little weight to his dismal forebodings. Had he not told us a story to make our hair stand on end, about flying serpents that we should find at Nukhl: how once, when he camped on the plain, he had heard them whizzing past him? Possibly there may have been some foundation for the story in the existence of reptiles of such powerful spring as to throw themselves several lengths, but we saw no more of them than of the fiery serpents that infested the camp of Moses. However, much as we were disposed to laugh at his fears, we had observed, as we met several parties going Southward with camels heavily laden with supplies for the Convent at Mount Sinai, that they always went in large bodies, as if for mutual protection, and were told that whenever there was a small party, it took the old caravan route by the sea, to avoid the tribes through which we were now to pass.

The bare suggestion of robbers was of a kind to keep our faculties awake and our eyes open, to recognize any strangers who might present themselves to offer the compliments of the season. Having received these intimations, it was natural to connect with them certain casual

meetings, which might in other circumstances lead to a closer acquaintance. The day that we entered the South Country, several such appeared, who had nothing in particular to say, but who seemed to scan our party with an eye to business. One savage-looking fellow followed the dragoman and myself some distance, as we had dismounted from our camels, and were walking in the rear of the train. He was well armed, and as I looked back over my shoulder, I had the pleasing consciousness that he was a robber, who, if I had been alone, might have entered at once on the practice of his profession. Perhaps he was merely a scout for some larger party—"prospecting," as miners would say—taking in the situation so as to report to his master; or ready, if a good chance offered, to do a little stroke of business "on his own hook." After following us an hour, he rode off, whether to report to some robber-chief that the Howadjis were coming, we could not tell, though we had our suspicions the next day.

That night the dragoman informed us that we were now fairly in the enemy's country, and must set a watch for the night. It was the first time since leaving Suez that we had found such precautions necessary, though the officer in command at Nukhl had sent a file of soldiers to mount guard before our tents. We knew that there were Bedaween in the neighborhood: for some of our party saw at a distance the smoke of a camp-fire, and scarcely had we pitched our tents before we heard on a hill not far away the barking of a dog! How that sound startled us in the silence of the wilderness! This, we thought, did not come from an encampment, but from a village, as we had seen in the afternoon children driving little donkeys loaded with water-skins, which they had filled at some spring. We saw also a small patch of cultivated ground. These signs of habitation raised a mingled feeling: for we knew not whether

the strangers were friends or foes. We endeavored to conceal our presence as well as we could, camping in a little hollow between two ridges of the undulating country. As soon as dinner was served, the fires were put out, so as not to attract the notice of spies or of strolling parties, and then the men turned their attention to making all fast for the night. The dragoman sought to quiet our apprehension by saying that the Bedaween would not be likely to attack so large a party, and in any event would not be so eager to rob us as to rob our Arabs: for that they would covet the camels more than our worldly goods. But that was a very poor way of reassuring us: for we could much better afford to lose our money or our watches than our beasts of burden, which furnished our only means of getting through the country. To lose them would be a terrible blow, as it would leave us on the border of the desert, without any power of locomotion. So the camels were to be guarded as our very life. The men understood the matter perfectly, and did not mean to leave anything exposed. Accordingly, although the camels were turned loose to crop the scanty herbage for an hour, while the men were getting their supper, instead of being left out as usual for the night, they were all brought into camp, and stretching themselves on the ground, had their legs firmly bound so that they could not move, unless an Arab were to steal up in the darkness like an Indian, and cut the ropes, and "stampede" them before an alarm could be given, and the men rallied for defence. To guard against such a surprise, the men divided themselves into two parties, which should relieve each other through the night. This done, the dragoman assumed a protecting and patronizing tone: "Never you fear; we are used to this sort of thing, and will keep watch. You go to bed and sleep quietly." We did go to bed, and slept off and

on, though we woke a dozen times, and listened with ears attent, but heard nothing save the footsteps of our own men, who were creeping about like stealthy Indians all night long, keeping a sharp lookout for the approach of any hostile party, and thus watching for our safety as well as their own.

As soon as the sun was up, we dismissed our fears, and smiled at the imaginary dangers of the night; and Dr. Post and I were about to start out as usual in advance, he to botanize, and I to get a breath of morning air, leaving the baggage-camels to load up and follow, when poor Yohanna came rushing after us, and shouting in the wildest manner, "Gentlemen, do not stir until we are all ready to move together! You must not venture beyond the limits of the camp. We have come so far in safety; do not let us have a disaster at the very end of our journey!" We yielded to his entreaties, rather to quiet him than because we saw any special need of such extreme precaution. In a few minutes the pack camels were ready, and we all moved off in Indian file together.

The wisdom of his caution was soon apparent. As we came up out of the hollow where our tents had been pitched for the night, we rose over a swell of ground which again subsided into a gentle depression, only to rise again at the distance of perhaps a quarter of a mile, like the rise and fall of a rolling prairie. We had passed over the ascent, and nearly crossed the valley between, the Doctor and I leading the way, when suddenly as a flash of lightning, there sprang over the height on the other side, a party which claimed our immediate attention. It was composed of five men, two of whom were mounted on horses (!)—the first we had seen since we left Cairo—and three on foot. Instantly they threw themselves into position—recalling to Dr. Post what he had often seen in the

war, when a skirmish line was thrown forward so that each one could support the others, prepared alike for attack or defence. Two of the men on foot carried guns, one of whom instantly fell (of course, by pure accident) behind a bush, on which he could rest his musket. Their leader was a fierce-looking son of the desert, with all the dashing air of the daring brigand. He carried in his hand a spear, fifteen or sixteen feet long, pointed at both ends. They had evidently been on the watch for us, and came upon us with a spring and a bound, like a tiger on his prey. There could be no mistake this time; at last we were face to face with the robbers!

We drew up and halted. I was on the side nearest the chief of the party, who darted at me a quick, eager glance, as he rose on his horse with uplifted spear. I turned to look for our camels, which were scattered along behind us. They came on very slowly, lumbering over the hill; but still they came, and every moment brought them nearer. Ibrahim's old soldier with his rusty sword hurried up, as if he smelt the battle from afar, and the men with their match-locks were close behind him. The weapons I had so much despised before, had found their vocation now. The robber's glance followed mine, and he took in the situation in an instant. Meanwhile my cameleer had left me and advanced for a parley, and the two exchanged a few whispered words. It is said the tribes have a sort of freemasonry among them, by which a traveller who has paid tribute to one (as we had done when we paid the heavy blackmail at Nukhl) is allowed to pass through another, unless the two be at war. However this may be, any hospitable intent on the robber's part was strengthened by a sight of the force he would have to encounter; and so, making a virtue of necessity, this gallant knight of the road lowered his spear, and called aloud "Howadjis!"

(I can hear his voice now) signifying with a majestic wave of his hand that we were at liberty to proceed. We did not wait for a second invitation. The robber then turned with his attendant horseman and dashed away, followed by his men-at-arms. I touched my hat to him with all the grace I could command, as well pleased to give him this parting salute as if I had received his most affectionate embrace. Indeed I never said good-bye to a friend with more pleasure in my life.

This whole scene had passed so quickly that it was all over before we could fully realize what it meant. We had had a narrow escape. If we had started from camp in disregard of the warnings of the dragoman, and had been fifteen minutes ahead of our convoy, we should have been "done for" so neatly and quickly that we should hardly have known what had happened to us till we were left by the roadside. I do not suppose we stood in much personal danger—that is, unless we made resistance. The Arabs prefer not to shed blood, because they have a mortal dread of a blood-feud, which may pursue them for years. Therefore they prefer not to take life, if they can avoid it; but if we had shown a sign of resistance, such as drawing a pistol, probably we should have been killed on the spot. If we submitted quietly, we should have suffered nothing worse than the loss of all we possessed. The robbers seem to pride themselves on doing their work thoroughly, and will "clean out" the most plethoric traveller in a way that will leave him with no temptation to extravagance in his expenses for the rest of his journey. They would have taken our money, watches, and probably most of the garments we wore, unless the stripping us would detain them too long till the arrival of our party. Of course they would have seized the camels we rode unless they feared that the slow-moving beasts would impede them in their escape.

That this is not an exaggerated impression of the risk we ran, could be shown by the experience of any number of travellers. When I was at Damascus, dining one day at the house of the missionary, Rev. Mr. Crawford, he related his experience. It was in the Summer-time, and his family were away from the city at a retreat in the mountains, where he was to join them, and for the pleasure of the excursion had started on foot. Stopping for a few minutes at a spring by the wayside, suddenly a party of Bedaween came upon him, and seizing him roughly, demanded "Where's your money?" That taken, they relieved him of his watch, and then began to disrobe him, one taking his hat and another his coat. When it came to his waistcoat, he mildly remonstrated, saying that "it would be of no use to them, and they had better leave it to him," to which one replied by striking him on the mouth. By this time he was in a dilapidated condition, when one came up, and seeing that he still had shoes on his feet, ordered him to take them off. If any fiery but foolish American wonders how he could submit to this without resistance, I answer, The robbers were fifteen to one, and this submission was his only safety. He said "I generally carried a revolver on such excursions, but this time I had left it at home, and to this probably I owed my life. If I had had it, the impulse would have been to seize it and fire, when I should have been run through the body in an instant." As it was, his life was spared, and they left, as garments to cover him, his shirt, pantaloons, and stockings! All this scene took place near a threshing-floor, where men were working, but who did not dare to interfere. As soon as the robbers were gone, they took pity on him who had fallen among thieves, and let him sleep on their threshing-floor, and provided him in the morning with an Arab costume, which he put on, and a few hours after presented himself to his wife arrayed as she had never seen him before.

Philosophizing a little, as I am apt to do, on my varied experiences "as I walk through the wilderness of this world," I find that this business of robbing, as practised by the Bedaween, is not from the love of violence for its own sake, nor the act of specially wicked natures, as might be similar crimes committed in civilized society, but is grounded in a deep philosophy. Every man, civilized or savage, has a theory of life, written or unwritten, and the theory of the Bedawee is that no man has a right to property which he is bound to respect. It may be best not to press his prior claim; it may be prudent to keep out of the reach of the law; but if a good opportunity presents itself, he is restrained by no conscientious scruple. Might makes right, and he

> Follows the good old plan,
> That he should take who has the power,
> And he should keep who can.

The Arab makes a fine distinction between stealing and robbing. He is not a thief, and you cannot offer him a greater insult than by making such a suggestion. If you were to fling such a taunt in the face of a proud sheikh, he would very likely answer you with the point of his spear. A thief is one who creeps behind your back, or into your tent, and rifles your pockets—a practice to which the low, base-born Fellah might stoop, but which the proud Bedawee would scorn. He is a lofty, high-minded robber, who meets you on the desert face to face, and if he attacks you, gives you the opportunity to defend yourself, and if he despoils you, it is by a right which is recognized in all nations, the right of the strongest. He takes your goods, but he takes them in open and honorable battle.

Of course, we might say that our knight of the road who met us this morning, took us at a disadvantage, com-

ing upon us alone and unarmed, while he and his men were armed to the teeth. But he would answer "Why were you *not* armed? It is the business of every man to be ready to defend himself on all occasions, and if he is not, and suffers for it, he has nobody but himself to blame."

With such a theory, it is not strange that robbery should be regarded not only as honorable, but as above all others the profession of a gentleman, as is the profession of arms in civilized countries. The Bedaween hire the Fellaheen to cultivate their fields—that is work fit for slaves; but for the chief of a tribe, the one pursuit in life that fires his ambition is to mount the finest Arabian steed, to poise the longest and sharpest lance, and ride abroad, like a knight of chivalry, in search of adventures. When one thinks of all this, he must feel that it would be almost an honor to be robbed by such a hero!

And yet I fear our dragoman did not take this view of the case: for the incident of this morning produced a deep impression on him, and he renewed his entreaties to us to keep together. But it was hard to keep Dr. Post in line: for just then he spied some of the wild flowers of Palestine, and at once gave a dig at his camel, and started off in pursuit. The vicious old creature did not appreciate the claims of science, and roared her disapprobation. But her master forced her on, and then brought her back, and we straggled on together. Our attention was soon diverted to the beauty of the country we were entering. The hills broadened down and the valleys rose, till the undulations were like the long swells of the ocean. Gradually the landscape assumed an aspect of fertility. Rising over a gentle ascent, behold a field of barley that was fresh and green! How beautiful it looked in contrast with the desolation over which we had passed! There were also more

signs of human habitation, in frequent clusters of the black tents of the Arabs. We were now descending from the hills to the plains. Far behind us was the range which bounded the Desert of the Wandering, while before us opened the great Plain of Philistia. My companion was full of the history, as well as of the flora, of this region. "We are now entering," he said, "one of the great historical plains of the world—one which has been trodden by all the conquerors from Alexander to Napoleon. And long before Alexander, Cambyses the Persian crossed this plain to invade Egypt; and marching the other way, came the armies of Pharaoh Necho, to invade Syria. And so back and forth has the wave of conquest flowed and reflowed between Asia and Africa—between the empires on the banks of the Tigris and the Euphrates, and that on the banks of the Nile."

So discoursed my friend while I listened with eager interest, so absorbed that I did not notice that we had got a mile ahead of the greater part of our camels, when we heard behind us a voice shouting and a man running toward us. Fearing that some accident had happened to our baggage train, we waited till he should come up. When he appeared, I perceived that he was a huge negro, with teeth that were like tusks, and who had altogether a repulsive aspect, like one of those brutish-looking creatures that may now and then be seen guarding the harems of Cairo and Constantinople. As soon as he came up, he signified by loud voice and vehement gestures that we could not proceed any further; that we were now in the territory of another tribe, and could not pass without paying tribute; and not to be too modest about it, said that we must hand over a hundred pounds! As soon as the dragoman and our two cameleers learned his errand, they seized him, and I thought would choke him. But the strength was not to

be all on one side. At once the negro threw up the skirt of his garment as a signal to his comrades, who were close at hand—for we were but a few hundred yards from an Arab village—and they came rushing out in great numbers. The matter began to look serious. Loud words and fierce gestures might lead to blows, and as both sides were armed, there might be bloodshed. Dr. Post reined up close beside me and whispered, "Keep perfectly cool. Do not dismount. If there must be a fight, let them fight it out among themselves; but on no account get off your camel." This was good advice, but not so easy to follow: for the black fellow, set on by others, seized our camels by the halters, and dragged them to the ground; but we kept our seats, and hitting them a cut with our whips, they sprang up again. This performance was repeated a number of times. The other side appeared to be divided. Some were willing to let us pass, and motioned to us to go on, though at the same time they held up their hands in token that a slight douceur would be acceptable. But the black fellow, supported by others, was obstinate, and again and again seized our camels and dragged them to the ground. Our impulse was to strike him in the face with our whips, but as that might have brought on a general combat, we thought it more prudent to hold in our wrath till our baggage train appeared. At last it came up, and our men mingled in the fray. Our old soldier, who had lost his chance three hours before, was now like an Irishman "spoiling for a fight." Our men gathered round us, and kept the crowd at bay, while they pushed us along. Meanwhile our dragoman, who was always for peaceable measures, even at some sacrifice of dignity, was cajoled into going off to the tent of one of the head men of the tribe, to whom he gave some paltry backsheesh to be distributed among the ruffians, for which Dr. Post rebuked

him severely. As soon as there was a break in the crowd, we pushed through, and urging on our camels, at last got clear. As he saw us making our escape, the negro cried out almost piteously, "Are you not going to give us *anything?*" "Not the mother of a para," said the Doctor (the para being the smallest of coins), and so we came off victorious. The whole scene lasted half an hour, and was very exciting and threatening; but we felt a satisfaction in the fact that we did not, for a single moment, lose our self-possession; that we did not once dismount from our camels, and did not give the rascals a penny! But what an idea it gave us of the barbarism that prowls on the very borders of civilization: for we were no longer in the desert, but in Palestine—in the very Pashalic of Jerusalem!

So we were getting on. We had wished for an adventure, and now we were gratified. To be stopped on the road twice in one forenoon, was something new in our experience. However, there is nothing like being used to it. Half an hour after all this excitement we were seated under a bank in the dry bed of a watercourse, taking our luncheon, as if nothing had happened.

Thus refreshed, we climbed up out of this river bed and came on a broad upland, which presented an aspect of fertility that struck us with astonishment, coming from the long wastes of the desert. Our afternoon's ride lay through a land of plenty—a land flowing with milk and honey. I can hardly describe the pleasure I felt at the first sight of a cow! I wanted to stroke her and pet her. Mingled with the herds of camels was an occasional herd of asses, and what interested me much more were the beautiful herds of horses, for this South Country is a favorite region for raising the finest breeds of pure "Arabians." As a relief to the long monotony of black goats, there were

large flocks of sheep, of the breed known by the enormous size and fatness of their tails. The country generally was cultivated. The soil was light and thin, owing to a lack of care in husbandry, but still it was waving with harvests. Whichever way we turned (except south)—north, east, and west—we saw the wide, open, rolling slopes standing thick with wheat and barley. Between the upland pastures clothed with flocks, were the valleys covered over with corn. That evening, as we stood at the door of our tent and looked towards the sunset, and over the varied landscapes which were touched with the light of departing day, we had to confess that we had rarely beheld a scene of greater natural beauty. But for the absence of trees, we might have been in one of the finest parts of England.

We camped to-night, not, as the night before, in a hollow, to lie hidden from observation, for there were too many Arabs near us to render concealment possible, (we could see their black tents and hear the barking of their dogs,) but on a gentle swell of ground, from which we had an unbroken sweep all around the horizon.

Hardly were the tents pitched before we had our sympathies greatly excited by an incident of the day. When we had resumed our march, our old soldier was missing, and did not appear the whole afternoon. At night he came into camp mad with grief and rage. It appeared that in the melée he had had his sword taken from him, and though he went back for it, he could not recover it. The poor old man was in despair. It was a matter that touched his honor. The weapon itself was of little value, and I would have gladly given him another and much better one. But that was not the same thing. This was the badge of his military profession, the sign that he had been in the wars, when he followed the great Ibrahim in his conquest of Syria. But we comforted him with the

hope that on his return he might resume his search with better success.

After we had smoothed the ruffled plumage of the warrior of our camp, we gave ourselves up to the peace of the hour. The night was beautiful; the firmament was glorious with stars: never had they shone more brilliantly in all our wanderings on the desert. We stood as it were on the top of the round world, over which the heavens were bending for protection. It seemed as if a spot thus heaven-enclosed must be intended only for the abode of purity and peace; as if this must be a world where sin and sorrow could not come; where man could not lift his hand against his brother; and there was no such thing as robbery and crime.

CHAPTER XIX.

RETURNING TO CIVILIZATION.

Although we had passed a quiet night, our experiences of the preceding day had not been of a character to make us wish to prolong our slumbers far into the morning. I was up at half-past four, which was generally understood in the camp to mean that there was no more rest for man or beast. By six o'clock we had had our breakfast, the tents were struck, and we were in the saddle. The sun was just rising over the vast undulating plains as we set out on our march. Who would not rise early for the exhilaration of such a morning ride? We were approaching the end of our journey; our long and toilsome marches were nearly ended; the Desert was behind us, and the Land of Promise was before us.

I have spent between four and five years of my life in foreign countries—a portion of the time in distant parts of the earth—and have had many and varied experiences, but nothing I think that imparted a sensation quite so exquisite as this coming up out of the desert—out of void and vacancy, out of vast spaces and solemn silences—into the world of life and sound and motion. The return is very gradual. Nature gives signs of the coming change by an occasional quiver in her frame; perchance a rill trickling in the sands marks where the life-current is flowing faintly in her veins; then a new vegetation shows itself, as familiar flowers peep out by the way, and the small grasses begin to appear—tokens of a new existence into which we

are entering; we seem to be getting nearer to the heart of things, to the warm beginnings of life; the earth is not dead, but sleepeth; it begins to breathe with the breath of God.

Then there is a tender vibration in the world of sound; the note of a bird, faint as if she hardly dared to hear the voice of her own singing, quivers for an instant in the deep solitude; to which follow hours of marching, when is heard in the distance the bleating of sheep, and after another long march the lowing of cattle; and then

> "There is a floating whisper on the hill";

there is a gentle murmur in the air; and on the straining ear comes the sweetest sound ever heard, that of human voices: and so we come back into the living, breathing world again.

I hardly know of anything to parallel this change, or wherewith to compare it. It is said that not far above the earth's surface it is intensely cold and dark; that the sun's rays must pass through the earth's atmosphere to give forth light and warmth. So it is that in passing into this new atmosphere we feel as if we were entering "the warm precincts of the cheerful day," to quote that exquisite line of Gray's Elegy, which seems as if written when the poet's eye was filled with "the light of setting suns." Indeed we may quote the whole stanza *in exact reverse*, as giving the perfect delineation of the change which comes over us:

> For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
> This pleasing, anxious being e'er resigned,
> Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
> Nor cast one longing, lingering look behind?

Here "the warm precincts" are not behind, but before; the "longing" is not for that we leave, but for that we enter; and we return to "this pleasing, anxious being," which, however troubled with care, still is life—life never

so dear as when we come up out of the desert, as out of the valley of the shadow of death.

To-day this feeling of a new existence was bounding in our veins. Everything conspired to kindle it—the dewy freshness of the morning air; the wide, open, rolling country, like the breezy downs of England. The wild flowers of Palestine were under our feet; the birds were all abroad, enjoying the freshness of the early Spring-time; the Syrian lark rose fluttering from the ground, and sung her sweetest carol to the coming day. This mingling of sights and sounds and sweet fragrances created an intoxication of the senses, in which we rode forward in a kind of ecstacy, when suddenly we heard behind us the tramp of a horseman coming at full speed. What could it be? Another robber-chieftain in swift pursuit? A messenger to forbid our passage through the country? In an instant dashed up beside us a man of fine, even noble aspect, mounted on a beautiful Arabian steed. He sprang from the saddle, and struck his spear into the ground, and the steed stood motionless, while his rider advanced toward us. He was unarmed; he had neither sword nor gun—nothing in his hand more formidable than a chibouque. We turned to receive him. He presented himself with a profound salaam, and no more startling message than an invitation to the Howadjis to do him the honor to accompany him to his tent, and join him in his morning repast. I have no doubt that he had killed a sheep to prepare us a feast. This was a complete surprise. Here indeed was Oriental hospitality. We were strangers in the land, simply passing through it, and this chieftain (for such he appeared to be) went out of his way to show us courtesy. We responded with profuse acknowledgments to the invitation, which in other circumstances we should have been delighted to accept, but explained that this was our last

day's march; that we were pressing on to Gaza, in hope to be able to communicate with our families, from whom we had been long separated. He listened with evident regret, and still pressed us gently but earnestly, when suddenly it dawned upon us that there was a reason for this extraordinary urgency. It appeared that he was the mudir of the tribe through which we had passed the day before, and was anxious to efface from our minds the impression of the little "unpleasantness" which had marred our passage through his territory. This occurrence touched him not merely in his honor and the honor of his people, but in another way. By the Eastern law, he was responsible for his tribe, as the father of a family for his household. If a crime is committed, and the offender cannot be found or brought to justice, the chief of the tribe may be held responsible. But if he could have beguiled us to his tent —if we had once broken bread and eaten salt with him— that would have condoned the offence, and we should have been estopped from seeking other reparation. When we discovered this, Dr. Post took a different tone. Though still polite, he gave the mudir to understand very plainly that we had suffered a great outrage in passing through his territory, which ought to be punished; that we did not wish to be hard upon him, if he would produce the real offender; that, in short, if he would restore the money which had been extorted from our dragoman, and the sword which had been taken from our old soldier, and more than all, bring the black ruffian, who was the leader in the attack, to Gaza, and deliver him up to the authorities, we would take no further measures; otherwise we should be obliged to report the matter to the Governor immediately on our arrival. This was just what he feared, and he tried to deprecate our anger. He pleaded that the man might have escaped, and the sword be hidden so that

it could not be found. In such a case he thought we ought to show a little consideration and forbearance. "Would we come to his tent to talk it over?" He was very humble, and came up to my saddle and kissed my hand—a great act of humiliation for the mudir of a powerful tribe. I felt humbled for him, that he should be so humbled before me, and if I could have followed my impulse, would have fallen on his neck, and not only forgiven him, but pledged him eternal friendship. But Dr. Post insisted that this was no light matter; that other travellers were exposed to the same indignity and insult; and that for their protection it was our duty to make an example. I could but acknowledge that he was right at least so far as this, that the man should be severely punished. With this stern sense of duty, the Doctor waved away the proffered hospitality as if it had been a guilty temptation; we resumed our march, the camels took their long strides, leaving the mudir standing in the path, to return to his tent "a sadder and a wiser man."

We now quickened our steps across the valley, and up the hill. The view on every side was enchanting. The sun had just risen, but as it was behind us, it did not dazzle us, but cast a soft light on the green fields that waved round us like a sea; and as it shone along a chain of mountains on our right, it brought out in alternate sunlight and shadow their projecting masses and their more retired recesses. That was the Hill Country of Palestine! Could we but stand on the top of that ridge, and look down on the other slope, we should see nestled among the hills the city of Hebron, where David reigned seven years before he removed to Jerusalem, and where an aged tree still bears the name of Abraham's oak. There is the burying-place of the patriarchs in the Cave of Machpelah, to which Jacob, dying in Egypt, charged his children to

carry his bones, saying "There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah." So near were we in the country over which we were passing to the scenes of sacred history, and even to patriarchal times.

But our musings were cut short by a sight which now burst upon us: for as we rose above the crest of the hill, before us lay the Mediterranean! We had already snuffed the sea breeze, but now we saw the great waters, the white caps rolling in on the long sandy beach. I am afraid there was a little choking in the throat, and some tears crept into the eyes, as we beheld the sea which at once separated and united us with the living world to which we belonged. On the shore was a town—the very one which had been our destination ever since we rode out of the gate of the Convent of Mount Sinai. It was yet two hours away, but little mattered that since it was *in view*, and every step brought us nearer. Once more trees appeared in the landscape, and patches of ground became more richly cultivated. To open fields of grain succeeded orchards and gardens, divided by hedges of cactus, through which we made our way. As we approached the city, the domes of mosques rose into view, and minarets lifted their tall and slender pinnacles in air. But suddenly my eye caught another sight, which fixed it more than any dome or minaret—it was a line of telegraph! I had always thought telegraph-poles the ugliest objects with which man ever deformed the fair face of nature; but when I saw the slender line that ran along their tops, and thought of the messages winged by lightning that flew over it, these gaunt, ungainly objects took a sudden and strange attraction, and I looked up to them almost with reverence as the long legs of civilization, with which it goes striding over hill and valley, over island and continent, to unite together all the

kindreds of mankind. If that first telegraph-pole had been

"The mast of some great admiral,"

or a flagstaff, bearing proudly the banner of my country, it could not have sent a keener thrill through my heart. It was the sign that we were coming home: that we were no more strangers and pilgrims, or even exiles, but fellow-citizens in the great commonwealth of humanity, which by this token seemed to open its arms and receive us to its bosom.

At the entrance of Gaza is an open space, which is the usual camping-ground of parties, where we left word for the baggage-train to halt and pitch our tents, while we went forward into the town. As we came to the narrow streets, hardly wide enough for the camels, we dismounted, and leaving them to the men, pushed forward in search of the telegraph office. Following the poles, we soon found where the wires led into a building. It was a strange sensation, in coming out of the desert, to be in such an office, and hear the click of the telegraph again. Dr. Post found in the operator a former pupil at Beirut, who received him with great warmth, and took a personal interest in hastening our messages. It was but a few minutes before his family were informed of his safety. The dragoman also sent a message to Jaffa to have horses and mules sent down to take us to Jerusalem, for the days of our camel-riding were over. Then came my turn: "How long will it take to get a message to Florence?" "We can send it in either of two ways—by Constantinople, in which case it will reach Florence some time this afternoon; or by Alexandria, from which it will go by submarine cable, and be subject to no detention, and ought to arrive at the longest within an hour; but a message by this route costs double that by Constantinople." "Never mind the cost;

send it by the quickest way." And the tidings of our safety were soon flying to Egypt, and diving under the sea.

Then for the first time we had a moment of rest, and set off to find an English clergyman, Rev. A. W. Schapira, whom Dr. Post knew. We found him at his school, and he gave us a welcome such as I have never failed to receive from missionaries in any part of the world. "Where are your tents?" he asked. We told him. "Do not stay there, for you will be surrounded by a crowd, and may be subjected to great annoyance. Have them pitched in my garden." We sent back a messenger in haste, who found that the camels had arrived and been unloaded, and that the tents were already up; but at the word they were taken down, and the camels loaded up again, and in an hour they came lumbering into the missionary's "compound," where we could pass a Sabbath in quietness and peace.

When at last our tents were pitched, and the camels were stretched on the ground, chewing the cud of sweet content, and the men were round the camp-fire cooking their food, we felt that we had gained a victory. We had accomplished the object with which we set out from Nukhl on Monday morning; we had reached our destination by a series of forced marches, in spite of discontented men and frightened dragoman; in spite of weather, of lowering clouds, threatening cold and rain; in spite of sickness and of robbers. At last we were safe; we had reached our desired haven, and looked back over the long way as the sailor, hardly escaped from shipwreck, looks back over a stormy ocean.

Our journey ended to our satisfaction, there came the settling of accounts. The old soldier, who was the only one of the Arabs that could read, had been entrusted by his master, the sheikh, with the contract and authority to

receive the balance due at the end, for a portion must always be kept back till the journey is completed, lest perchance, finding that they had all their money, they might leave us on the desert. The agreement had now been fulfilled to the letter, and the grizzled soldier was well pleased as the golden napoleons dropped into his hand; while a liberal backsheesh distributed among the men, made all smiling and happy.

The missionary now led the way into his house, which, like all Eastern houses, had a central court, enclosed by a wall, within which the sound of a fountain gave a delicious sense of coolness during the heats of Summer. In the rooms all was very plain and simple, and yet there was a neatness and modest taste, that I have found in all parts of the world, to mark the missionary's home, making it a type of Christian civilization. Within is order, comfort, and intelligence, while without is poverty and filth, vice and degradation, in their most disgusting forms.

Mr. Schapira and his excellent wife kept us to dinner, after which he accompanied us to call on the Governor to make our complaint of the attempted robbery. Jusuf Effendi is one of the most enlightened statesmen in Turkey, a man of European education, speaking both French and English. He was a member of the "Parliament" which the Sultan called after the Russian war, in which he was a leader of the small party of progress and reform. Indeed he was altogether too liberal for the latitude of Constantinople, for which he received a kind of honorable banishment to the small post of Governor of Gaza. But his time may yet come. He is not a Turk, but an Arab of the purest blood, of the tribe of the Koreishites, in which Mahomet himself was born. Should there rise up in the Empire an Arab party as opposed to the Turkish, there will again be an opportunity for his great abilities. It was

quite an Oriental scene as we entered the Serai, the Governor's residence, in the court of which was a swarm of officials, and of soldiers waiting for orders. In the courtyard was the prison, with many bad faces looking out from behind the bars. I think Dr. Post pleased himself to think of the hideous negro, with his teeth like tusks, behind those bars, and that he would not have been overmuch grieved to see his feet made fast in the stocks, or even subjected to the bastinado.

We ascended the steps and entered the room in which the Governor sits to give audience to those who come to him with wrongs to be redressed. He received us with all courtesy, an attendant brought coffee and pipes, and we presented our grievance. Our old soldier was on hand, with fire in his eye and vengeance in his heart, to tell the story of his wrongs. The case was a very plain one, and the Governor, after hearing it, called an attendant and ordered five horsemen to mount and ride in hot haste to the Arab village and demand the return of the money extorted, the soldier's sword, and above all, the body of the negro who had stopped our progress and dragged down our camels. Away they galloped over hill and dale, but the issue proved as the mudir had said : before they reached the Arab camp, some message had gone that they were coming, and the culprit betook himself to flight ; and the horsemen, after a long search, returned without their prisoner. But the watch was kept up a long time. At Beirut a letter reached Dr. Post from Mr. Schapira, saying that he had had a visit from the mudir, who begged as a great favor that, if the rascal were taken, he might be punished by the tribe instead of being delivered up to the authorities at Gaza. Thus the wholesome scare which they had received partly answered the ends of justice.

After returning through the town, and visiting the

bazaars and the principal mosque, where we ascended the minaret to take a view of the city and the sea, we returned to our tents weary, but with the feeling that at last we had reached a place of rest. We found how good it was to come back to the society of one's fellow beings, to what Charles Lamb calls "the sweet security of city streets."

And now, as the result of all my wanderings on the desert, I have attained to this piece of philosophy, which I leave for the benefit of posterity, that civilization is good enough for me! If any young man, full of the fire of ambition, and with the hot blood of youth in his veins, desires to set out to-morrow for the North Pole or the heart of the Sahara, let him depart in peace: only for myself I will say with Wisdom, Henceforth "I dwell in the habitable parts of the earth, and my delights are with the sons of men."

Meanwhile no answer came to my telegram to Florence. Dr. Post had heard from Beirut that all was well, but the afternoon wore away and I had no response. I began to feel anxious and troubled. At last, weary and exhausted, I retired to my camp-bed and fell asleep, when at eleven o'clock the tent door was softly opened, and some one stole in. I recognized the dragoman's voice, who spoke: "Dr. Field, here is a telegram for you." He struck a light, while I read, as well as I could amid the blinding tears, the sweetest words in the language, "All well." That was enough. "Thank you, Yohanna: Good night: Leave me now, and shut the door of the tent." For who would not be left to his own thoughts when his heart is swelling and running over with thanksgivings to the Great Preserver and Protector? My cup was full, and amid the manifold occasions for gratitude, last but not least, this was sure to return: Blessed be civilization!

CHAPTER XX.

THE MOSLEMS OF GAZA—A BRAVE MISSIONARY.

The message which awaked me Saturday night produced a strange tumult in my thoughts. "All well!" Did those words drop down from heaven, or from the top of the campanile at Florence, to be caught up by the night wind, and borne to this farthest corner of the Mediterranean? Was it strange if, under the cover of our tent, I felt as if "rocked in the cradle of the deep," and listening to the cry "All's well" from the ship's deck—a cry repeated all night long, marking the hours? But that cry sounded so far away that it seemed as if it were not uttered by any earthly guard or sentinel, but by some heavenly Watcher gliding before us through the darkness, and making a path of safety in the great waters. Such at least were the fancies that, waking or sleeping, filled my thoughts and mingled with my dreams, till the sun shone through the curtains of the tent, and lo! the Sabbath had come. It was broad day, and yet there was neither sight nor sound of motion in the camp. The camels were still prone on the earth, as if they had reached the end of their wanderings, and the desert should know them no more; while the men lay motionless, as if they were sleeping their last sleep. The sky was of the deepest blue, as if it had caught the reflection from the Mediterranean; and in the air there was

> "The sense of something far more deeply interfused,"

which no philosophy can explain but as an Invisible

Presence, before which nature stands still, and which fills the trembling heart with its own fulness of peace. That morning, at our family prayers, we felt a new overflow of gratitude at the thought that we had "moved our tent so many days march nearer" at once to our earthly and our heavenly home.

To give a sacred sweetness to the day, we had for the first time since leaving Cairo, a Christian service. There is no church in Gaza, not even a chapel, however small; but in the early days the disciples, in the land where we now were, assembled in an upper room, as in later times persecuted Christians found sanctuaries in crypts and catacombs; and so in the missionary's house we joined with his family and a few others, and listened to the worship of God in our own tongue wherein we were born. Mr. Schapira, as a missionary of the Church of England, read that service which I have heard on many a shore and sea. He is very liberal in embracing all Christians in his communion of saints, and made no scruple in asking me to conduct the service with him, and it was a sweet and sacred hour when we all knelt together, English and Americans and Syrians, and committed ourselves to Him who is the God and Father of all.

I have become very much interested in the work of this excellent missionary. He is of Jewish descent, and is a native of Russia, having been born at Odessa, on the Black Sea, but has married a German wife, and lived in England, where he learned to speak English perfectly, and labors under the auspices of the Church Missionary Society. Four years ago he came to Gaza—a town inhabited almost exclusively by Moslems of the most bigoted and fanatical kind. It was hardly possible to find a more discouraging and apparently hopeless field. When he passed in the streets, he was hooted at and cursed. But he bore all this silently,

determined to see what patience and faith could do. He opened schools for the children of the very men who cursed him, and so slowly but surely did he win his way to their respect and confidence, that he now has two hundred children, most of them Moslems, who, it is to be hoped, will not be like their fathers.

Then he found that slaves were brought from Egypt and sold in Gaza. Indeed so open were the slave-dealers in their business, that hearing of the arrival of a Howadji, they thought they should find him a profitable customer—for of course he would prefer a slave to a hired servant—and came to ask if he did not want a "likely" boy or girl. So much was he annoyed by this that finally he determined to pay them in their own coin; and when they came again with the offer of a boy of unusual attractions, he said he could not decide to purchase till he had seen the lad, and had him in his house. So they brought him for a couple of days inspection. Apparently they had forgotten, if indeed they ever knew, that a slave thus in the house of a British subject is free. Straightway the missionary applied to the English Consul at Jerusalem, who forthwith gave the desired protection; so that when the slave-dealers (there were five of them) returned, they found that their prize was free, while they were put in prison for breaking the law! Nor did this brave missionary cease his efforts till the boy had been sent back to Egypt and up the Nile, to be restored to the home from which he had been stolen. After that he received no more offers of bargains in human flesh, and those who plied the iniquitous trade were more retired in their operations. So much for the Christian courage of one man!

Perhaps his interest in this matter was intensified by his experience in Africa. He had been for two years a missionary at Sierra Leone, during which time he made many

excursions into the interior. On one occasion he was some twelve days march from the coast, where he found in a village a Mahometan missionary, who while endeavoring to turn the people to Islam, thought it not inconsistent with his sacred character to purchase a slave! He had bought a poor boy, whose feet, for fear of his running away, he had made fast in the stocks. Such a sight was enough to move a heart of stone, and deeply touched the missionary. But what could he do? He had no money to buy the poor child's freedom. Not long before this the Bible—which had been translated into Arabic by Dr. Van Dyck—had been printed at the press in Beirut, and thirty copies had been sent to Western Africa. One he had now with him. The sight of this excited the ardent desire of the apostle of Islam. Books are not common in that part of the world, but here was a volume in his own mother tongue. What would he not give to possess it! He offered the missionary any price, if he could but obtain one. This conversation took place in the presence of one of the African kings. Mr. Schapira listened to the earnest request, and finally made answer: "So you would give anything for a copy of the Arabic Bible? Well, you shall have it: it is yours. Now give me that boy!" "Oh—oh—oh! But—but—but!" exclaimed the Moslem. This was a turn of affairs which he did not expect, and he was now as anxious to recede from his rash offer as he had been to make it. But my friend held him to his agreement, asking if he intended to be put to shame before the king by breaking his word? The upshot of it all was that the Moslem priest took the Bible, and gave up the boy, whom Mr. Schapira forthwith despatched down to the coast, to be put into the missionary school at Sierra Leone, where (though long a sufferer from the torture inflicted upon him by having his feet made fast in the stocks) he found under the English

flag protection and liberty, and experienced (what he never knew before in his short, sad life) true Christian kindness. At the last advices he was still there. He was thus snatched from a fate worse than death, and introduced to what, it is to be hoped, will prove a happy and useful life.

This touching incident was told not at all in the way of boasting, but was called out simply by the fact that Dr. Post was from Beirut, which led to a conversation in regard to the Arabic Bible, that had been translated and printed there, a copy of which had made its way into such a remote part of Africa, and been used to purchase the freedom of a child who seemed born to hopeless bondage.

In his present field at Gaza, this devoted missionary has need of a rare combination of wisdom, patience, and courage—of all the virtues indeed which go to make up a true hero. He is virtually an exile from his country. He and his wife are the only Europeans in the place, and have to meet all the disagreeable associations of a petty Oriental town. But worse still is the danger of ophthalmia. Nine out of ten persons in Gaza have lost either one or both eyes! From this the missionary himself has suffered greatly, while his wife finds her eyes so weakened that she cannot use them at all at night.

Mr. Schapira is the first man whom I have met who has expressed any hope of reaching the Bedaween. It is sufficiently discouraging to attempt to do anything for the people of the cities; perhaps as they are more bigoted Moslems, they are more unapproachable than the children of the desert. Their fanaticism extinguishes all natural feeling. They have not even the common instinct of gratitude for favors received. "No matter how much you do for them," said my friend, "it is never enough, and they are never grateful." He told me of a man whose poverty and destitution were such as moved him to pity, and he

found him employment to keep him from starving. "And yet that man," he said, "would come behind me when walking in the street with my wife, and thinking we did not hear him, mutter the most horrible curses on our heads."

But, remembering how the Divine Master would do good even to those who reviled Him, this devoted missionary has sought to imitate that blessed example, and by his kindness to the children, whom he has gathered into his schools, has made some impression on their parents. In the same spirit of trying to save those for whom others have abandoned hope, he has gone literally into the wilderness to the fierce tribes, who, if more ignorant than the dwellers in cities, are less bigoted. Their mouths are not so full of cursing and bitterness. They preserve at least somewhat of the kindly instincts of nature, which have not been killed by religious fanaticism. And so, when discouraged, as he often is, and disheartened, by the ingratitude of the Moslems of Gaza, he flies to the Bedaween of the desert. Of course he does not go with an ostentatious display of his condition as better than theirs, or anything which can excite their cupidity. They see him coming among them, a plain, simple man, and poor almost as themselves, with hardly more than a staff in his hand, certainly with little money in his purse. He goes to their black goats-hair tents, and claims their hospitality. He does not despise their homely fare; he dips his hand with them into the dish; and when they gather round their camp-fire, he sits with them as their guest, and leads their thoughts to things of which his own mind and heart are full. He told me of his experience. At first he tried to read to them the Bible, but they yawned and almost went to sleep. He found that to persuade them to listen, he must not read out of a book; and so he laid aside the

Bible, and began to tell them a story. It was "the old, old story" of the creation of the world, of the fall of man, and of the redemption by Christ, to which, coming in this new dress, they pricked up their ears and listened eagerly, as if listening to a story of the Arabian Nights, often interrupting him with an exclamation of wonder, like the Turkish "Mashallah!" Thus he had held them listening spell-bound till midnight, and in one case till two o'clock in the morning. After this, who shall say that the Gospel, brought in wisdom and in love, may not reach even the descendants of Ishmael, whose hands are against every man, and every man's hand against them?

In the afternoon word came to our tent that the Governor had sent to announce his intention to pay us a visit. An Oriental visit, especially from a high official, is a very formal affair, and it would be the extreme of rudeness to refuse to receive it. Accordingly we repaired to the missionary's house to await his coming. At the appointed hour he appeared, with a number of attendants (the badge of his office) who formed a circle round, but never presumed to utter a word. Coffee was brought and a long narghileh (in which the smoke is inhaled through water) for His Excellency. With an Oriental this is an indispensable preliminary to conversation; and when his lips had closed on the amber mouthpiece, he was in the serenest mood, and the flow of wisdom began. I sat on the sofa beside him, and with an occasional inquiry to draw him out, had little more to do than to listen to what he had to say. But that was full of interest, for the conversation took a wide range. The Effendi spoke with the utmost freedom of political affairs in the East. He appreciated all the difficulties of Turkey, but yet was not without hope for it, and dwelt with relief and pleasure on every redeeming feature in the situation. From Turkey

he passed to Egypt and Tunis, and the other Mahometan States on the northern coast of Africa. Nor did he forget his own motherland of Arabia: for, as I have said, he is an Arab, and looks with hope to the future of his race. In all his observations there appeared a degree of intelligence and a liberal spirit which at once surprised and delighted us. If there were in Turkey many such men as Yusuf Effendi, there would be indeed hope for the future of that decaying Empire.

When we returned to our tents, our cameleers were preparing to depart—another leave-taking, which gave us a momentary pang. We went round among them with a friendly smile for all, and a special word of sympathy for our old soldier, who could not be comforted for the shame that had been put upon him; and it was a real pleasure to learn (though it was not till after I had reached America) that on his return to Nukhl he had gone back to the tribe that robbed him, and made his peace with them, and recovered his sword, with which badge of his military rank he returned home in all the pride of a soldier. Even our camels I looked upon with some tenderness, knowing that it was for the last time. Dr. Post wasted no sentiment on the beast that had vexed his soul from day to day, but was glad that he should never see her again. But my camel had become a pet; she had borne me patiently across the desert; and now as I stroked her neck, which she received as gently as a favorite pony would receive a caress, I felt a real sadness that I should see her no more.

Then the men mounted, and the camels rose up at the word of command, and filed out of the garden, and took the way of the desert. Hardly had they disappeared before we heard a jingling of bells, and in came the horses and mules that had been ordered from Jaffa to take us to

Jerusalem. The muleteers took the place of the cameleers, and soon made themselves at home, camping beside us, to be ready for the morning march.

The sun was now sinking in the west, and the missionary joined us for a quiet walk out of the city, to meditate at eventide. Passing between the cactus hedges, we made our way through the deep drifted sand, and sat down by the sea, where perhaps Samson had once stretched himself upon the warm beach, displaying his Herculean limbs, which were the wonder and the terror of the Philistines. Gaza still retains the memory of the deliverer of Israel, and to this day they point out the hilltop to which he bore the gates of the city, and the site of the Temple of Dagon, the pillars of which, they tell us, are buried under ground, divided in the middle, where they were broken by his giant arms.

Dr. Post had met here a young physician, who had been his pupil at the Medical College in Beirut, and who had just brought a wife from the Lebanon to his new home. They desired us, as we were to leave on the morrow, to come and spend our last evening with them. As we left the missionary's house, I offered my arm to his wife, who declined it with a smile, saying that it would attract such attention as to make us unpleasantly conspicuous. Mr. Schapira said that he never took his wife's arm in the streets of Gaza, as it would be regarded by the Moslems as an exhibition of the freedom of Christian manners! So much for the difference of customs in different countries, and among peoples of different religions.

As we came into the streets, a servant led the way with a lantern, which is quite necessary through streets that are not only narrow and winding, but generally pitch dark: for gas and even ordinary street lamps are little known in Eastern cities. But there was another reason for having a

torch-bearer. Any native venturing into the streets at night without a lantern, would be arrested by the police: for these dark passages are the hiding-places for thieves who lie in wait for unprotected strangers. But little we thought of any precautions needed for our safety, as we entered a paved courtyard, and mounting by a stone staircase to the second story, found within doors the light and warmth and cheerfulness of a Christian home. The society of one such family is a great resource to a missionary who finds himself almost alone among strangers. To "hold the fort" in a city of Moslems, full of fanaticism and hatred, requires the courage of a soldier, as well as the faith of a Christian. But he who is equal to the task is doing a work the full result of which he cannot hope to see. At the beginning it is a very humble work—that of opening schools, and gathering in poor and neglected children; but the seed thus sown by education, accompanied by the influence of a Christian home, a Christian life and example, is not sown in vain, and will spring up and bear fruit long after he who scattered it has passed away.

CHAPTER XXI.

THROUGH THE HILL COUNTRY TO BETHLEHEM.

If one test of the civilization of a country be the existence of roads, we are in a land as yet but very imperfectly civilized: for there is not a road in all Palestine—or only one, and that hardly worthy of the name. Some years ago, when the Empress Eugénie, having been to Egypt to give by her presence Imperial pomp and state to the ceremony of opening the Suez Canal, was to pay a brief visit to the Holy Land, the authorities, by extraordinary exertions, smoothed the rough places, so that a carriage could be driven from Jaffa to Jerusalem; and Mr. Cook still sends a waggon over the road, in which travellers can be jolted up and down the hills; though one who is used to the saddle will suffer less fatigue on horseback. There is also a macadamized road from Beirut over the Lebanon to Damascus, built some years since by a French company, but that is far to the North, in Syria; so that it remains true that, with the exception of forty miles of driving to Jaffa, there is not a road in all Palestine, and we have still to go mounted, as when we were on the desert. The only change is from camels to horses. But this we found a great relief. Horses are much better suited to Palestine, where, instead of long stretches of sand, one has to pick his way—at least as soon as he enters the Hill Country—over rough, stony paths, both in the narrow valleys and along the sides of the mountains. The

Syrian horses are small, but active and hardy. They generally go on a walk, but step more quickly than camels, and accomplish a greater distance in the day. They are also very sure-footed — a matter of great importance in going up and down the mountains.

Thus mounted, our cavalcade of horses and mules, though less picturesque than a caravan of camels, presented quite a brave show the next morning as we filed out of the missionary compound, where we had said good-bye to our kind friends, and set out for Jerusalem. The mules of the country, though not so tall as camels, are still very large and strong, and will carry about as heavy loads. The number of animals for our pack train was diminished as their burdens were lightened. Having left the desert, it was no longer necessary to carry the heavy casks of water. Our provisions, too, could be reduced, as we had only to lay in a store for a few days, instead of weeks. Six mules carried our tents with their furniture, and the necessary provisions. Dr. Post and I had a couple of gray ponies that bore us so lightly that we rode with little fatigue. Another horse was for the dragoman. After this file of horses and mules came a very small donkey, which brought up the rear. This was for the captain of the muleteers, who was a large man, and his proportions being swelled out by his turban and his baggy trousers, he looked like the Grand Turk; and as he bestrode his little beast, he made a comical figure waddling along behind the huge mules, that kept up a constant jingling of bells as they swung along the road.

In the vicinity of Gaza are some majestic olive trees, which, by their age (for they must be centuries old) and their gnarled and knotted limbs, remind us of the ancient oaks of England. Skirting the road for a mile or two, they form a kind of fringe or border for the fields of

wheat and barley, which stretch away in the distance. As soon as we are fairly in the country, we find it the same as that over which we passed in coming up from the South—not a plain, but a succession of gentle undulations. This South Country is the richest part of Palestine, unless it be the Plains of Sharon and Esdraelon. The soil itself is fitted to yield abundant harvests. Think of a land without a stone! Scarcely a pebble can be picked out of the soft, warm earth. It is only as we approach the hills that the stone begins to crop out. For hours we pursued our way through this richly-cultivated country. Great numbers of the people were abroad in the fields, engaged in the husbandry of the Spring. Farmers were plowing their land, sometimes with a single beast, and often with a camel and an ass, or an ox and an ass, yoked together, in disregard of the Hebrew law. The plow was always of wood, pointed with iron, and had but a single handle, so that there was a special force in the singular number "hand"—not "hands"—being put to the plow.

Yet rude as were the implements of agriculture, there were on every side signs of the industry which the earth repays with abundant fruit. In one respect the people show a more careful husbandry than ours; they weed out their fields of grain, as we weed out our gardens. This afternoon, all round us, as far as the eye could reach, the country was of the purest emerald green. One drawback only there was to the beauty of the landscape—the absence of trees. This is caused by the accursed Turkish Government, which blights whatever it touches, and which virtually prohibits tree-culture by imposing a tax on every tree, not when it is grown and bearing fruit, but as soon as it is planted. But even despotism cannot destroy the natural fertility of the earth, and it yields such increase as makes this truly a land flowing with milk and honey. The best

pictures of it are found in the Psalms of David, who passed in it, or on its border, many of his early years. In yonder Hill Country he took refuge when he was pursued by Saul, and "hunted like a partridge on the mountains." From the recesses of those hills he looked out on the same rolling sea of green that glistened in the sunrise this morning, and here he found much of his imagery of flocks and herds and shepherds. From his eagle's nest he saw far below, stretching away to the horizon, the illimitable pastures, "the cattle on a thousand hills," and sang exultingly, "The hills are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing." A knowledge of the methods of agriculture still pursued, and which have doubtless come down from that day, sometimes leads us to detect new beauties of expression, as when we observe that, while the fields are plowed, they are never harrowed, their levelling being left to the gentle rain: "Thou makest it soft with showers; *Thou settlest the furrows thereof;* Thou blessest the springing thereof."

Some of the signs of civilization are wanting: there are no roads and no fences; the fields are divided only by stones. But the divisions are as fixed and as sacred as if the fields were hemmed in by walls ten feet high. "Cursed," said the Hebrew law, "be he that removeth his neighbor's landmark"; and to this day, to touch one of these stones is an offence which is more likely than almost any other to lead to bloodshed.

Somewhere on this rolling country, between two swells of land, there flows a brook, beside which we sat down to rest, and found an interest in the rural scene, from the conjecture of Robinson, which seems not improbable, that this little stream was the very one in which Philip baptized the eunuch, who was riding in his chariot towards Gaza, and who went on his way rejoicing in his new-found

faith, to carry light and joy back to the darkness of his own country of Ethiopia.

As we come up out of the South, we enter gradually the foot-hills of that mountain region which forms the Hill Country of Judea. We leave behind us what the Scotch would call the Lowlands of Palestine, and what in some of their features are not unlike the Lowlands of Scotland; we leave the broad uplands and wide valleys; the swells of ground rise higher on either hand, leaving but a narrow intervale, sometimes a mere strip of green, between hills that are rugged and rocky, but whose ruggedness is somewhat relieved by the fig trees, which are just in blossom, and the low shrubs which partly cover the rocks, and make them beautiful, as the purple heather clothes with bloom the bald Highlands of Scotland.

As we advance, the country becomes more thickly inhabited; villages are more frequent, and though the houses are of mud, they are more fit for human habitation than the black tents of the Arabs, open to all the winds and rains of heaven. There is also more of comfort and of decency in the clothing of men, women, and children. It was a pleasure to see once more the unveiled face of woman—a face perhaps plain and common, and bearing traces of labor and care, yet not disfigured by the hideous black veil, which does not of necessity betoken modesty in the wearer. As we rode through the villages, women were sitting round the fountains, or carrying water jars on their heads or their shoulders, like the Rachels and Rebeccas of patriarchal times.

We camped at Shummeit, just out of the little town, on the top of a hill which commanded a wide sweep of the horizon southward and westward; over the country we had left behind, and away towards the coast where the sun went down into the western sea.

The next morning we were early in the saddle, and after starting our baggage train northward in a direct course to Bethlehem, we struck across country to Beit Jebrin, which has some remarkable ruins, that date from the time of the Romans. From the remains of walls, it was evidently a fortified town, and was doubtless the site of a Roman camp, placed here to overawe Philistia. The Roman arch shows that these were built by the Imperial people, when they were masters of Palestine, as of all the East. The country about is honeycombed with structures underground, some of which are natural caves, which were perhaps used for the storing of grain; while others are hollowed out of the rocks, with passages and galleries, which may have been designed for the retreats of hermits. Besides these, there are other structures, which have more distinctly an ecclesiastical design, in which the pointed arch shows that they were of a later time, built perhaps by the Crusaders.

From Beit Jebrin we took a guide, as indeed we had need, for the hills were more and more closing in upon us. The road in which we could ride side by side, dwindled to a narrow bridle path, in which we had to keep in single file, and this became more steep and stony till it required all the vigor of our little ponies to clamber over the rocks. All day long we were making our way over the hills, rugged and bare and wild, such as we were afterwards to traverse in a large part of Palestine. It was five o'clock when we reached the summit of the ridge, and turned to look back over the sea of mountains, and away southward to the Plain of Philistia, and westward to the Mediterranean. As we rose over this point, which from its height commands an extensive view to the north, the dragoman, pointing to a long white line on the crest of a mountain, which was suddenly lighted up by the descending sun, exclaimed

"There is Jerusalem!" It was our first glimpse of the Holy City. It was not an ancient wall that we saw, nor even the dome of the Mosque of Omar, which stands on the site of the Temple of Solomon, but the Armenian Convent (for the numerous convents are the most conspicuous objects of the modern city); but for the instant a thrill shot through us as if we had caught a glimpse of the Heavenly Jerusalem. We said but few words, but gazed and gazed as we rode on over the hills and down the passes, till just at evening we dismounted at Solomon's Pools, which he built to furnish water to Jerusalem.

When we turned away from the Pools of Solomon, the sun was set, but we had still a long ride before us—at least it seemed long, for we were weary, the road was rough, and the shades of night were gathering. The moon, but a week old, lighted faintly the rocky path through which we picked our way. We rode on in silence till we began to ascend; we were climbing a hill, and when we reached its top we were in Bethlehem! Winding our way through the streets of the little town, we found our camp, and crawled off our horses, having been in the saddle twelve hours.

But the bright lights and the refreshing tea awaiting us soon put us in a cheerful glow, and we went out to take a night view of the scene around us. Our tents were pitched on the brow of a hill, looking down into a deep valley, where all lay as in profound slumber. Not a sound broke the deep stillness:

> The beating of our own hearts
> Was all the sound we heard.

But those hearts beat fast, for what memories were there to stir the depths of emotion. That valley below us was the field of Boaz where Ruth gleaned the blades of ripened grain!

And look across the valley to yonder hillside! That gentle slope, which is seen dimly in the pale moonlight, is the field in which, according to tradition, "shepherds were keeping watch over their flock by night," when "the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them." In this matter of localities it is best not to be too precise or too positive. Nor is it necessary to fix the identical spot. The exact point in space matters little, any more than the exact point of time. All we know, and all that we need to know, is that it was somewhere within the circuit of these hills that the shepherds watched; that it was in these skies that they saw the multitude of the heavenly host, and heard the song "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." That is enough to make the very heavens above us more serene, and the stars shine with a softer, tenderer light. We look upward as if we might catch some faint gleam of the angelic wings, or a far-off echo of the angelic voices. How they soared and sang! Never before did the earth hear such harmonies as these, which filled all the depths of air.

At length they ceased, and the vision vanished like a cloud. Higher and higher rose the heavenly host, and farther and farther the strains died away, till once more heaven and earth were still. And yet may it not be that they died away only to the shepherds' ears, while elsewhere they kept sounding on? Perhaps the celestial choir only ascended into a higher atmosphere, and there floated over other mountain tops and other valleys, the waves of sound circling round them till they touched every shore, and all tribes and kindreds of men heard the good tidings of great joy. O Christ, at whose birth the angels sang, will that song ever be heard again in the upper air of this poor world of ours?

CHAPTER XXII.

AROUND THE PLACE WHERE CHRIST WAS BORN.

In entering Palestine from the South Country, instead of from the sea by Jaffa, there is the advantage that we approach Jerusalem through Bethlehem, and thus follow a natural order in coming to the place of our Lord's birth before we come to that of His active ministry, as well as of His death, burial, and resurrection.

In the confusion of localities which is so common in the East, it is a comfort to our Christian faith that there is one, the identity of which is not disputed. Seven cities contended for the honor of being the birthplace of Homer, but no question has ever been raised in regard to the birthplace of Christ. Long before His birth, Bethlehem figures in the Jewish annals. As far back as the days of the patriarchs, Rachel died near Bethlehem in giving birth to Benjamin, and her tomb is still shown, where, if her dust be not preserved, yet lingers the sweetness of her beloved name. Here too David was born, and in his boyhood rambled over these hills, and perhaps kept his father's flock in the field of his great-grandfather Boaz and his great-grandmother Ruth. As the City of David, Bethlehem had a place in the regard of every pious and patriotic Jew. Consecrated by such memories, it was pointed out as the future birthplace of One greater than David, by a prophecy, seven hundred years before Christ was born: "Thou Bethlehem-Ephratah, though thou be little among

the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth that is to be ruler in Israel." Not only was it Bethlehem, but Bethlehem *of Judah*, to distinguish it from Bethlehem of Galilee. So precisely was indicated the place which was to be of such interest to all who should believe in Him unto the end of the world.

As to the time of the Saviour's birth, it is reckoned by scholars to have been at least four years before the date commonly fixed for the beginning of the Christian era. This earlier date is easily determined by reference to other events fixed in profane history. It was in the reign of Augustus Cæsar, at the time of a general enrollment of the inhabitants which had been ordered from Rome. But as to the season of the year, Biblical chronologists do not agree, and probably never will. Each season has had its advocates. Indeed there is hardly a month which has not been adopted by some commentator for reasons convincing to himself. The general consent of the Church since the fourth century has accepted the 25th of December. But some reason that it could hardly have been so near midwinter, when travelling would be difficult among the hills of Judea, that the Roman Emperor would send forth a decree that all should go to their own cities to be enrolled. This is partly answered by the fact that in Palestine there is an interval of about two months between the early and the latter rains, from the middle of December to the middle of February, which would furnish the opportunity required. Others argue from the fitness of things, that it might have been expected that the Saviour would be born in the Spring, when nature itself was in harmony with the new life that was coming on the world.

Such were our thoughts as we came out of the door of the tent, and looked down once more into the vale of Bethlehem. It was almost the last day of March—the

very budding and blossoming and flowering season of Palestine. The morning sun showed us what we had seen but dimly by moonlight; and as we looked down into the deep valley below, the field of Boaz was green with the freshness of the early Spring. All around, the terraced hillsides were covered with vineyards or with orchards, on whose varied colors the eye rested with delight — the tender green of the olive and the red flowers of the pomegranate, mingled with fig-trees which were now in full blossom. Surely this was the season of all the round year for the advent of Him who was, in another and a higher sense, to renew the face of the earth. So it seemed to us, and indeed if we could but follow the fancies of this inspiring hour, we should think it most in harmony with the event, that our Lord should have come into the world in the early dawn, when the morning star was just above the horizon, and the light of the rising sun began to glow over the distant mountains of Moab, and to touch the crests of this hill country of Palestine. But what matters it whether the Lord came at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning, so that He came? It is THE EVENT which concerns us rather than the season, whether Spring or Summer, or Autumn or Winter. What imports the season of the year to Him who "has all seasons for His own"? What matters it whether the star in the East shone on harvest fields or on wintry snows, so that it but led the wandering Magi till it came and stood over where the young child was? As to the month or the day, that is a minor point on which we are not careful to answer—content to accept the day which has been observed for centuries as that of our Redeemer's birth. When the year comes round and brings the happy Christmas time; and the bells are ringing in every Christian land, we would join with universal Christendom in celebrating an event

which brought "good tidings of great joy to all people." In such a spirit we take our morning walk to-day to the Church of the Nativity, to linger awhile beside the spot, where, according to tradition, our Saviour came into the world, and by the manger where they laid Him.

In visiting "holy places," one finds not infrequently a jar on his devout meditations, at the mingling of things sacred and profane, of the common and the trivial with that which is of far higher interest. As I walked along the narrow streets and looked into the little shops of Bethlehem, it was not easy to adjust the mingling of the petty cares and drudgery of daily life with the solemn and religious thoughts which filled the mind. And still they are not in such disaccord as they might seem; for Bethlehem is inhabited by Greek and Latin Christians (with but three hundred Moslems in a population of five thousand), whose main industry is that of providing material aids to devotion. As of old there were various kinds of business connected with the Temple, so here the chief occupation of the little town is the making of rosaries and crosses and images of saints from olive wood, from coral and mother of pearl, for the use of pilgrims.

Passing these we direct our steps towards the Church of the Nativity. Even a stranger would have no difficulty in finding it, for the building towers high above all others at the end of the town, the centre around which are clustered three Convents, making altogether an imposing architectural pile. Following the pilgrims, who are moving in one direction, we come to an open square, at the end of which rise the massive walls of the Church, which was begun by Helena in 327, and completed by Constantine in 333. It was formerly entered by three arched doors of imposing height and breadth, two of which are now walled up, and the third partly so, leaving an entrance almost as small as that

at the Convent of Mount Sinai, and kept small for the same purpose of protection. In former centuries the proud Moslems were accustomed to ride through the high-arched portal to profane the sacred place and insult the feelings of those who came here as devout worshippers, to guard against which it was walled up on the side and at the top, so that now the lintel is not very far above a man's head. But this low and narrow door is quite sufficient for the pious pilgrim, who would not enter on horseback, but on foot, or even on his knees, if that were necessary, to mark his reverence for the holy place. He enters, and finds himself in the presence of the greatest shrine save one (that of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem) in the Christian world. The interior is vast and sombre. Everything speaks of centuries long gone. The old walls, which have stood for more than fifteen centuries; the open rafters of cedar overhead sent from England and reared in place by hands that have long been dust; give an impression of that which is very ancient, even if it were not for the voices of the monks "chanting the liturgies of remote generations."

We pass up the aisle to the end of the church, where, under the great choir, a flight of steps from either side leads to the crypt, which is the supposed scene of the birth of our Lord.

In coming to this place of pilgrimage, the first question is as to its identity. While no doubt can exist that our Saviour was born in Bethlehem, yet in what precise spot in Bethlehem, is a question which has been much debated: and although, like the question of the day or the season, it is not material to the significance of the event, yet it is a matter of interest, especially when we are standing on what is supposed to be the very spot. It is said of the mother of Christ that "she brought forth her first-born

son, and wrapped him in swaddling-clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." This first resting-place of the Holy Family is supposed to have been under ground, which at least is possible. The hillsides of Palestine are full of caves, which were often used for storing grain and feeding cattle. Sometimes a spacious cavern was turned into a kind of hostelry. If the impression be conveyed that there was an indignity offered to Mary and Joseph, in that they were obliged to take refuge in such a place, this will not be so interpreted by those who have lived in the East, and who know how in the great khans or caravanserais men and animals are often herded together in the same enclosure or under the same roof. Several weeks after this I was on Mount Carmel, where is a small but substantial stone building designed for the use of pilgrims, with but one large room, whose only division is that the place for men and women is two or three feet higher than that for the beasts of burden. On this raised platform the pilgrims sit and eat and sleep, while but just below them stand "the beasts of the stall." Along the edge of the raised platform is a long stone trough, in which, when not crowded with the heads of cattle feeding, children are laid down to sleep as the most convenient place of rest, and for safety, as its depth makes it a secure cradle, in which a child would be as safe from falling as in its mother's arms. Indeed at the moment that we entered, there was a child sleeping quietly in this stone manger, which gave us an exact image of the manger-cradle of Bethlehem, in which they laid the holy child Jesus.

As to this crypt under the church, whether it be the very place of the manger, there is a further question, not so easily answered. Tradition may not be conclusive, but certainly it is entitled to weight; and so far

as tradition goes, it points to this spot, and to no other. Justin Martyr, who was born at the beginning of the second century, but a few years after John, the last of the Apostles, was in his grave, speaks of the birth of Christ as having taken place *in a cave* near Bethlehem. Origen, who was born in the latter part of the second century, refers to it as a matter about which there was no dispute. And here in the fourth century was erected the great basilica, in everlasting commemoration of the event. In the latter part of that century, Jerome fixed his residence on this spot, to be near the birthplace of his Lord, while he wrought upon his great work of the translation of the Scriptures from the Hebrew and Greek into the Latin tongue. Against this concurrence of tradition there is only a vague uncertainty, so that the balance of probabilities may be said to incline in its favor.

With such a leaning towards belief, it was with a deep feeling that I descended the steps, and found myself in the Grotto of the Nativity. It is like any grotto or cavern, with low roof, only ten feet high, and would be quite dark but for the number of lamps, that cast their light on the marble pavement, in which the most brilliant object is a silver star under the altar, that is supposed to mark the very spot where our Lord came into the world. Encircling it is the inscription : *Hic de Virgine Maria Jesus Christus natus est* [Here Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary]. Opposite to this, and but a few feet distant, three steps lower, is another altar, covering the supposed place of the manger.

Had I been wholly incredulous as to the spot, I could not but be moved, if it were only by sympathy with the emotion it awakened in others. It was just before the Holy Week, and Bethlehem as well as Jerusalem was thronged with pilgrims. Here they came in crowds, and

felt a strange awe as they entered the Grotto of the Nativity. They fell upon their knees before the altar; they bowed their heads in prayer; they kissed the sacred spot marked by the silver star, while tears fell upon the pavement; and as they lifted their eyes to heaven, and their lips moved silently, it seemed as if their thoughts were floating upward with the cloud of incense, and that they were responding to the prayers offered, according to the Greek and Latin rituals—*pro vivis et defunctis*—for the living and the dead.

So much was I interested in the associations of this ancient church—the oldest perhaps in the Christian world—that after I had been over it and under it and around it, and gone away, I came back again to spend another hour, and to renew the impressions of the place. As I walked up the aisle a second time, a monk in the coarse dark brown robe of the Franciscan Order, with a rope round his waist, recognizing me as a stranger, and perhaps divining the country from which I came, addressed me in English. He was an Irish monk, and had lived in America! He was very polite, and invited me into the Convent, taking me to the refectory and offering me refreshment, and up on the roof, which commands a beautiful view down into the valley and over the surrounding hills; from which we returned to the church, and to the grotto under it, and to the study of Jerome, where he spent the last thirty years of his life translating the Bible, and where was witnessed the scene of his Last Communion, which has been immortalized in the great painting of Domenichino. As we passed from place to place, we were deep in conversation about the sacred localities, in which I soon discovered the intense jealousy of the different Christian sects of the East. This church is walled in by three Convents—Greek, Latin, and Armenian—which are not planted against its sides to

serve as buttresses for its support, but like hostile fortresses, that wished to keep in range of each other's guns. My guide spoke with evident bitterness of the way in which "the Greeks" had usurped control. He said they would not allow the Latins even to celebrate Mass at the altar over the birthplace, which he seemed to consider a great privation, even though the Latins had the altar over the manger! Indeed for a long time the Latins were excluded entirely. The question of the "holy places" was one of the causes of the embittered feeling between France and Russia, which led to the Crimean War, and it was finally owing to the determined position of Louis Napoleon, that the Latins obtained the rights which they now enjoy, apparently in equal degree with the Greeks.

Such exhibitions of religious jealousy, not to say animosity, produce a painful feeling, and it is hard to keep alive the associations of the birthplace of Christ, in the presence of a temper so little like that of our Master. Some are so grieved by this unchristian spirit, that they retire in a mood very far from that of devotion. And yet the bitterness which shows only human infirmity, cannot drag down to its own level that which is Divine ; nor can the gross superstitions which have gathered round the place, destroy the sacred reality.

Walking slowly down the aisle to the side door which opened into the Latin Convent, the good monk courteously took his leave, while I lingered yet a little while within the walls that wakened such venerable associations. Turning again, I retraced my steps towards the end of the church, and once more descended into the Grotto of the Nativity. It was the same scene as before—the pilgrims were kneeling, the prayers were ascending. Withdrawing a little from the altar not to disturb the worshippers, I gave myself up to some quiet thoughts

suggested by the place. Standing in the Grotto of the Nativity, how could one help trying to recall the scene witnessed here nearly nineteen centuries ago, before which the Magi knelt, and before which the Christian world is still kneeling? It is but a familiar domestic scene, a young mother with her first-born child in her arms. There are no surroundings of circumstance to give it pomp and splendor. It is not a royal birth, announced to an expectant kingdom by the waving of banners over a great capital. The fact that a child was born probably did not produce the slightest stir even in the inn. It was but a Hebrew woman, humble in appearance and attire as the subterranean chamber in which she had taken refuge, and perhaps with not a single attendant but Joseph, not even a nurse to perform the commonest offices for one who with her own hands "wrapped her child in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger." How insignificant was such an event! How little was there in that poor young mother to distinguish her from the thousands of the daughters of Israel!

And yet, such are the strange mutations of time, that no one of woman born, excepting only the son whom she herself bore, ever had such a name and place in history. How little she thought—lowly in heart as in life—of the homage that was to await her in future generations! As she lay here in this Grotto, on her bed of stone, she may have heard over her head the tramp of Roman soldiers, or of the crowd that had flocked to be enrolled at the bidding of Cæsar. Rome and Cæsar! The very words struck awe into the heart of a Hebrew, man or woman, as they suggested images of greatness and power. Little could one so poor dream that in the lapse of centuries her own humble name would be heard in the streets of Rome; that temples would rise to her, more numerous

and more vast and splendid than the heathen temples they displaced; and that thus, poor, weak, and human as she was, she would be exalted as an object of worship. This indeed is an exaltation which throws all human honors into nothing. What are thrones and diadems to this? What queen so great, though she were the mother of a long line of kings, as to be worthy to be named in the presence of her before whom even kings and queens bow, hailing her as Regina Cœli and Mater Dei!

It would be a long history that should trace the growth of superstition, which culminated in this exaltation of the mother of Christ to a degree that became nothing less than idolatry. In the Roman Church not only is Mary revered as the mother of our Lord, but she is exalted to be a partner of his throne—the sharer of his divinity. She is the object of ceaseless intercessions and prayers. In every cathedral in the Catholic world, the Ave Maria mingles with invocations of the Redeemer.

This is more than honor: it is worship. It is giving to the creature that which belongs only to the Creator. These superstitions and idolatries have produced in Protestant minds a revulsion of feeling, which sometimes carries them to an equal extreme the other way. We are so shocked by a false estimate that we hardly take pains to get a true one. We find it difficult to disentangle our thoughts from this mass of legend, and to form a just conception of a character which is beautiful because of its freedom from all pretension, its simplicity, its modesty, purity, and truth. But surely it is worth the attempt. Shutting out all false lights, can we not, by the light of Scripture alone, form a just conception of the mother of our Lord?

In such a spirit let us study once more the group in this Grotto of the Nativity, and what do we see? A Hebrew maiden, of humble birth, with nothing of the

queenly in her looks, such as poets and painters have given her. The artists of the Middle Ages are largely responsible, not for the deification, but for the idealization, of the Virgin Mary. Divesting ourselves of these misleading impressions of medieval art, we picture not a wondrous beauty of form or face, but that beauty of the soul which shines through the countenance, showing itself in deep, tender, thoughtful eyes; the spiritual blending with the womanly, producing a kind of illumination, such as is seen only in the faces of saintly women. Without ascribing to her supernatural graces, we can well believe that there was something sweetly spiritual in her face, as became the descendant of a long line of mothers in Israel—devout women who had been waiting for the kingdom of God. Her mind was filled with sacred thoughts, "waiting," like Simeon, "for the consolation of Israel," and so full of these great hopes, that she was, though "troubled," not affrighted by the apparition of the angel. For such interior grace and purity she was chosen to be the mother of our Lord. And when beneath this lowly roof came that blissful hour, there overspread her countenance an added grace which it never had before. There was no halo round her head, but in her face shone the light of love. Her eyes perhaps were downcast, as if she felt, at that moment more than ever, how unworthy she was of the honor which was given her, and yet there was the inexpressible beaming of a mother's joy, as she took her first-born child—and such a child—within her arms. Such is the image we gather from the few faint touches in the New Testament—that of a simple woman, pure, unworldly; with a woman's capacity for suffering, as well as for devotion; not self-denying so much as self-forgetting; never thinking of herself, but with her whole existence wrapped up in that of her Son, to whom she clung, not only with natural

affection, but with unbounded faith as her Lord and Master.

While therefore we disown and reject, as unworthy of those who worship God only, the superstitious homage paid to the mother of Christ, we cannot but feel that the honor which is justly due to holy men and women, belongs in the highest degree to her whom God himself honored so greatly. How can any one speak lightly of her whose name is introduced in the most venerable of ancient creeds in connection with that of our Lord, "who was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary"? "Blessed art thou among women," said the angel, and surely all generations may call her blessed who was chosen from her race to be the mother of Christ, the one to whom His eyes opened first in life, and turned last in death. She who bore that relation to our Saviour cannot be indifferent to us. She who received the Christ-child in her arms, and laid him in a manger; who watched over his infancy; under whose roof he grew in favor with God and man; who shared his bitter sorrows; who "stood by the cross"—"Stabat Mater Dolorosa"; to whom he cast a dying look of ineffable tenderness—to her is due, not worship, but the love and reverence of all the ages.

And that is the truest reverence which regards her, not as a being out of nature—a celestial spirit that came into our sphere to be the "mother of God"—but as in all things human. When we learn to look upon her, not as a divinity, or even as an angel, but simply as a woman and a mother, we shall see how, in the honor put upon her, honor is done to all womanhood and all motherhood. Recognizing her in a relation which they also bear, all mothers, without kneeling to her as an object of worship, may look into her pure and saintly face, and find in her love and tenderness an inspiration and an example.

But whatever the inward grace and spiritual beauty of the mother of our Lord—pure and noble and saintly as she was—yet she shines chiefly by reflected light. In the celebrated picture of The Nativity by Correggio, the light is made to emanate from the Child, from which it shines in the faces of all the wondering group. This is as true to reality as it is beautiful in art—the chief glory of the mother was in her relation to her Divine Child, and it is the illumination of His countenance which casts up such a radiance into her face.

As we picture to ourselves that scene, we imagine the thoughts of that young mother concerning her child. She remembered the words of the angel, and had often pondered them in her heart; and now bends over his cradle, endeavoring to read the mystery of his fate. But her eyes were holden that she could not see it. Well was it that it was so, for amid all the signs and tokens of future glory, there were dark intimations of a period of suffering that must precede it. What meant those mysterious words of Simeon: "A sword shall pierce through thine own soul also"? The Christ was born, but to what was he born? Not to glory only, but to suffering such as the world had not known. Could the mother in that hour of happiness have foreseen all the future, her heart would have thrilled not only with rapture, but with pain. She would have seen coming to her child sorrows from which maternal love could not defend him. Could she have foreseen the trials and the bitterness of his mortal life—the agony in the Garden, the mockings and scourging in Pilate's hall, and the final scene, of which she was to be a witness—she would have turned away her eyes from the sight, and in her motherly shrinking from it might have implored the God who gave him to take him back again, ere yet he entered on a life of so much suffering.

And yet beyond the darkness, beyond the clouds and the shadows, there was a brightness such as never shone on the world before. The full significance of that event no imagination could conceive. The Magi, bending low and offering gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, could not grasp the infinite destinies that were wrapped up in the life of him who lay apparently a helpless child in his mother's arms. Nor could that mother herself, in her fondest dreams, take in the great reality. Had her eyes been opened to see what was dawning on the world, she would have seen the new faith extending, till nations came to measure their own existence by the years and centuries from the birth of Christ.

Such are some of the thoughts that come to us in the Grotto of the Nativity. If it be indeed the place of our Saviour's birth, then is there not on the round globe a spot of greater interest than this, over which shone the guiding star, and sang the heavenly voices: for it has witnessed immeasurably the greatest event of all time. The birth of Christ was the coming of God into humanity—the coming of a new life into the world. The manger of Christ was the cradle of our Religion. Under this lowly roof was born, not only Christ the Lord, but Christianity and Christendom, from which have flowed all the mighty influences of modern civilization. He who would trace these to their source, must follow them far back in the ages to this subterranean chamber, as the fountain in the rock from which they sprung. Of all this what could that Hebrew mother know? Only as she looked into that sleeping face, she may have remembered how it was written, "A little child shall lead them." That child was to be indeed the leader of the human race. All history was in that manger-cradle. The fate of unborn generations was held in that little hand.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE DEAD SEA AND THE JORDAN—JERICHO.

At Bethlehem we were within six miles of Jerusalem, but we did not enter it that day, nor yet on the morrow: for Dr. Post, who is familiar with the geography of the country, suggested that it would be an economy of time, and of our facilities of travel, while we had our horses and mules and complete camp equipage, to make a detour to the Dead Sea and the Jordan, an excursion of two or three days; so that on reaching Jerusalem, we could dismiss our rather expensive retinue, and give ourselves up to seeing the sights of the Holy City. Accordingly we despatched Yohanna with all speed to Jerusalem for our letters, while we were seeing Bethlehem, and in the afternoon took horse for the Dead Sea. Hardly were we in the saddle before we sprang off again: for we had come to the famous well by the gate of Bethlehem, of which David, who had often tasted its sweetness, so desired to drink that his three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, at the peril of their lives, to bring him a draught. To this well the daughters of Bethlehem still come to fill the jars which they balance so gracefully on their shoulders. One was even now at the place, and at our request drew up water from the well and gave us to drink. It was a trifling incident, but a pleasant one, thus to have water given us to drink from the Well of David at the hand of a maiden of the Hill Country.

Keeping on our way, we soon left Bethlehem behind.

As we got out of the town, and our little company stretched out in single file, I observed that we had an addition to our party in a mounted guard. It is a significant token of the utter absence of protection in this country under the rule of the Sultan, that a traveller cannot go thirty miles from Jerusalem, to the Dead Sea or the Jordan, without an armed escort. Parties may venture unattended, but they do it at their own risk. The Bedaween, who occupy these hills and valleys, consider it as their "stamping-ground," and that they have a right to levy toll on travellers. It is a thing perfectly understood, and every party pays a certain sum—a kind of blackmail—to the sheikh of the tribe, for which he guarantees its safety. Without it, his own retainers would be the first to rob the unprotected traveller. Understanding so well from our past experience the law of the desert, we were well pleased to see a fine athletic Arab, well mounted and well armed, ride to the front, and thus assume to be the "body-guard" of our party. He was mounted on a light, active pony, and had slung on his back a double-barrelled gun that looked as though it might do execution in case of necessity.

The country we entered soon after leaving Bethlehem, furnished the most perfect contrast to the terraced slopes, covered with figtrees and vines, which gave such beauty to the City of David. It was a succession of brown, barren hills, to which the only relief was in the myriads of wild flowers, and in occasional glimpses of the waters of the Dead Sea, which appeared far below us in the basin of the mountains. In its general aspect the region was almost as desolate as the desert itself, and indeed its claim to that character is indicated in the name it bears, for we are now entering the Wilderness of Judea—the scene of the ministry of John the Baptist.

After three or four hours of this rough riding, of

ascents and descents, climbing the heights and going down into the depths, as we rose to the summit of one of these barren hills, we looked down into a deep gorge, in which stood a Convent, whose position and appearance at once reminded us of that at Mount Sinai, having quite as much the look of a fortress as of a Convent. It is built on the edge of a precipice. The brook Kedron, that flows under the walls of Jerusalem, forcing a passage, not westward to the Mediterranean, but east to the Dead Sea, has in the lapse of ages worn a channel hundreds of feet in depth, like a cañon of the Rocky Mountains. Although the chasm is not so wide, yet the cliffs are not unlike those one may see along the brink of the Niagara River. Here has been built with infinite labor a huge structure spreading over perhaps an acre of ground, which in its day was a famous monastery. It is fourteen hundred years old, having been founded in the fifth century. Saint Saba, who gives it its name, must have belonged to the Church militant, if what tradition says be true, that on this very spot he attacked a lion in his den, like another Samson, and after slaying the beast, took possession of his den as a cell. Another version of the story is, that instead of killing the lion, he subdued him by his saintly life and his prayers, so that man and beast occupied the same cell, and lived in perfect harmony. The reader can take his choice of these two stories; no doubt one is as true as the other. Here in this lair of a wild beast the old fighting anchorite gathered round him a large community of monks. In modern times it has sadly dwindled, numbering now only some three-score, who are cloistered or imprisoned here. We were told afterwards in Jerusalem that it was a sort of ecclesiastical penitentiary to which rebellious priests or monks were exiled to do penance for their sins—or perhaps for their virtues, for they would be quite as likely to

be sent there if they showed too much zeal; if their ardor in their sacred office or fervor in preaching should suggest an unfavorable contrast with their ecclesiastical superiors. Nothing would be more likely to subdue any excess of enthusiasm, to cool the ardor of a young apostle or the fervor of his eloquence, than the silence of one of these monks' cells. He might pace up and down the walls that overhang the depth below, and preach to the jackals that make their holes in the rocks on the other side of the abyss; but he would not be likely to disturb the composure of "His Beatitude," the Greek Patriarch of Jerusalem.

The Convent serves also, in case of need, the purpose of a caravanserai, not only for pilgrims to the Jordan, but for ordinary travellers. The monks were quite willing to give us lodgings, but we preferred our own clean beds and the fresh air of our tents. We had, however, the full range of the interior, going up-stairs and down-stairs, and even on the roof, as well as through the prison-like quarters of the holy fathers.

One token of the peculiar sacredness of this monastery, is that it is jealously guarded against the intrusion of the other sex. No woman must enter its sacred precincts. I fear the holy fathers would be sorely scandalized if any roguish traveller were to drop a lady's slipper in the court. How quickly it would be thrown over the walls into the chasm of the Brook Kedron, unless perchance it fell under the eye of some poor monk who had left in him a touch of human feeling, and who might, if unobserved by his brethren, snatch it up and hide it in the folds of his coarse robe and take it to his cell, and there shed bitter tears at the thought of the happy days of his childhood, when it was not a sin to look in the warm and loving face of his mother or sister.

But this suggestion is quite too romantic, and too human for the monks of Mar Saba, in whom every vestige of our common nature was long since dried up and withered away. Never have I seen such bloodless specimens of humanity. No wonder that they are so, shut up within these walls where the sunlight strikes them but a few hours a day. They are like plants in a cellar—wasted and withered. As Madame Roland exclaimed on her way to the guillotine, "Liberty! what crimes are committed in thy name," so here we have to exhaust every exclamation of horror and surprise at the unutterable follies committed in the name of Religion.

It is very evident that women are not admitted here; if they were, they would soon bring a glow of sunshine into the place, instead of leaving it dark, dingy, and musty as it is! If I were Patriarch of Jerusalem, I would reverse the order of things, and turn out the monks, and leave it solely to the other sex. If it were taken possession of by a company of nuns, or sisters of charity, they would soon renovate it, and give it a look of cleanliness and comfort, that would make it a place fit for human habitation.

But sunlight gilds even prison walls, at least the outside of them, and when the sun rose over the mountains of Moab, and shone into these deep gorges, it lighted up the old Convent with a kind of glory, that set us all alert and aglow as we mounted our ponies and picked our way along the edge of the cliff by a narrow path walled in by a parapet to keep us from going over the precipice—a depth of six hundred feet—till our horses' hoofs rattled down into the rocky bed of the Kedron. Our mounted guard rode ahead, with eye and ear alert, as if he might spy an enemy lurking behind the rocks. We were told that there was less danger now than there might have been a few weeks before, as the Bedaween had but lately

driven their flocks across the Jordan into the land of Bashan for pasturage.

On emerging from the gorge of the Kedron, we found the character of the country the same as yesterday; the same succession of ascents and descents, the same clambering over rugged hills, winding around heights, and descending steep declivities; till gradually we came down to the level of the Dead Sea.

The ride took us five hours, and was very fatiguing. In the early morning, while the air was fresh, it was exhilarating; but as the sun rose higher, striking full on the slopes of the hills and into the deep valleys, the heat became intense, so that by eleven o'clock we were glad to take refuge in a clump of bushes, where we could get a little shade and an hour's rest, after which we mounted again and rode on to the shore.

My first impression of the Dead Sea was one of surprise at its beauty. Its very name seemed to be equivalent to the Sea of Death. Indeed it had been supposed that its life began with death; that its existence dated from an act of destruction, when the Cities of the Plain were destroyed by fire from heaven; and naturally I thought of it as a dull, sluggish, almost stagnant, body of water, lying in a "plain," which was not a garden of fertility, but a sandy desert, with perhaps here and there scattered fragments upon the shore, the melancholy tokens of its utter desolation. This idea vanishes at the first glimpse caught from the side of the mountains. Instead of the black waters of Death, we looked down upon a deep blue expanse that had all the beauty of the Scotch or Swiss lakes. Its one unique feature is its extreme depression on the earth's surface, for it is the lowest body of water on the globe, lying thirteen hundred feet below the level of the Mediterranean. But this rather

increases the effect of the glassy surface, glistening like a mirror so far down in the depths of the earth, and deepens the tranquil beauty of the mountain-guarded lake.

If we had been surprised at the beauty of the Dead Sea, not less so were we at the mountains of Moab, to which writers and painters have hardly done justice. Their apparent height is of course greatly increased by the depression of the sea beneath. Rising up so steeply, they cast a deep shadow on the waters which lie so far below. It is a grand chain of mountains, clothed with that rich purple tint which gives such beauty to the Apennines, as seen in the journey from Florence to Rome. But these summits have associations such as do not belong to the Alban Hills, or any range seen from the Campagna : for it was here that Moses came to take his first and only view of the Promised Land, and to die. Scholars are divided as to the precise point of the chain which is Mount Nebo, and which is the peak of Pisgah ; but it could not have been far away, for it was "over against Jericho," and so must have been within the sweep of the eye, as we look up from the shore of the Dead Sea. Other associations carry us back far before the death of Moses to the time when Abraham and Lot pastured their flocks in the plain whose cities were destroyed.

Of course superstition which is busy everywhere in Palestine, could not forego such an opportunity for legends and imaginary terrors as was furnished by a lake that was supposed to roll over buried cities. It has been said that the waters are so leaden that they lie in a dead calm, which no mountain breeze can stir into a ripple ; and that birds cannot fly over a surface from which are supposed to rise poisonous exhalations. This latter fancy is not peculiar to the Dead Sea. In Ireland, a few miles out of Dublin, is a glen embosomed in the hills, enclosing a

loch which is invested with the same charm of superstition. Moore has introduced the legend in a little poem, beginning

> "By that lake whose gloomy shore
> Skylark never warbles o'er."

An Irish peasant gravely assured me that no skylark had flown over it in thirteen hundred years! He spoke with as much assurance as if his memory extended over the whole of that period. It is a pity that such poetic fancies have to disappear before the prose of fact. But the legend is just as true in regard to the Irish lake as to the Dead Sea. If I had had the faith of a true believer, it would have been unfortunate that just as we rode down to the shore, birds, startled at our approach, took wing and flew directly over these deadly waters; and that a puff of wind, that came down from the hills, should have set the lake in motion, so that the waves came rippling up the beach, as if they had been the clear waters of our own Lake George. But when we came to bathe in the Dead Sea, we found it indeed of very unusual weight and density, though not exactly lead; and when, to make a final test of its quality, we took a swallow into our mouths, ugh! it tasted of Sodom and Gomorrah!

Mounting our horses after our bath, we rode along the beach around the head of the lake, to the mouth of the Jordan, which here flows through a long and level stretch of sand, which it has thrown up in its annual floods, till at last the impetuous stream checks its swift current as if folding its robes to die with dignity, before it is quite swallowed up and lost. This sandy shore is not hard like a pebbled beach, and the horses' hoofs began to sink under us, so that we had to dismount and make our way on foot, but we kept on, not content till we stood at the very point of junction, where the rapid river, whose every motion has been full of life, at last dies in the Dead Sea.

Retracing our steps, we mounted again, and turned northward to the Fords of the Jordan. As we could not keep along the river bank because of the dense jungle, we struck directly across the plain. The thick growth of reeds and rushes hides the river, but as we could see where it was flowing, it was easy to form a general idea of its character. The Jordan is born among the hills, having its source at the base of Hermon, from which it bursts forth like the streams that issue from the glaciers of the Alps, with all the fury of a mountain torrent. This character it preserves throughout its course, darting on swiftly like "the arrowy Rhone." Its rapid current gives it a force which is sometimes very destructive, but for all that it can hardly boast of the majesty of our broader but more slow-moving rivers. I am afraid that our colored brethren, who sing with such fervor

> "I want to go to heaven when I die,
> To hear old Jordan roll,"

would be a little disappointed were they to see "old Jordan," and find that it did not roll—for it has nothing of the peculiar swell and movement and sound of waves—but it *rushes*, if that will do. It rises so rapidly when the rains come or the snows melt on the sides of Hermon, that it sweeps everything before it, so that there is a peculiar aptness in the question of Jeremiah: "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they have wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"

After an hour's ride across the plain, we came to a more open space, where the jungle on the river side parted so as to allow us to come down to the brink, and we found ourselves at the spot which is generally held to be the scene of our Saviour's baptism. Whether the tradition is founded

in truth, may well be doubted. But, at any rate, this is devoutly believed to be the spot, and as such it is the most frequented place of pilgrimage in the valley of the Jordan. Here the pilgrims come by tens of thousands every year, rushing into the stream, like the Hindoos into the Ganges, as if the least touch of its holy waters were sufficient to wash away sin. We too bathed like the rest, though with no such sense of its miraculous virtue. However we may smile at a too easy credulity, no Christian can come to this place on the banks of the Jordan without emotion at the thought that he is perhaps on the very spot, where our Saviour stood while the Baptist poured the waters on His sacred head, and the Spirit descending like a dove rested upon Him, and a voice was heard from the cloud saying "This is My beloved Son!"

From the place of baptism, it is a two hours ride to Jericho. If, as is probable, Joshua crossed the Jordan at or near this point, we were now following the line of his march to his first battle and his first victory. The plain is not much more secure now than in the days of the Hebrew leader; for though in the course of centuries it has been swept by countless armies—by the Egyptian, the Babylonian, the Roman, the Moslem, and the Crusader—yet it is to this day a lurking-place of the Bedaween, who often despoil pilgrims and unprotected travellers.

That afternoon's ride was a fearful one because of the heat. The sun poured down on the plain as on the desert, and indeed it is like a desert in its desolate character. The soil is fertile, and yet it produces little, simply for want of irrigation, while on the border of the plain is a river which might be made to overflow it as the Nile overflows the valley of Egypt. The Doctor, who has a quick eye for utilizing natural resources, immediately had a plan for

reclaiming this waste, and explained how, by the use of an American invention, the swift-rushing Jordan could be made to lift itself up in volume sufficient to water the whole plain. With this it would be a paradise of beauty, for the depression of the basin of the Jordan and the Dead Sea is such as to give it a tropical climate, and with a supply of water it would have a tropical vegetation. What it might become is shown by what it now is on that side of the valley where water reaches it, for as we come nigh unto Jericho, the springs which burst out of the hills, and flow through natural and artificial channels, cause all the products of the earth to flourish luxuriantly. We rode through gardens and orchards, whose abundant growth gave assurance of what the country might again become with proper cultivation.

The name of Jericho (City of Palms) is pleasantly suggestive of its ancient beauty. Irrigated and cultivated as its environs then were, it may well have been embowered in palms, which would not grow in the Hill Country around Jerusalem. Alas! not a palm grows here now! And yet the region around it retains its natural fertility, and if "well watered" might again be what it once was, "as the garden of the Lord."

But Jericho is a place, like so many others in the East, where

"All save the spirit of man is divine."

It is hardly possible to imagine the poverty and wretchedness of the inhabitants, whose filth and squalor are in keeping with the mud-huts in which they live. This must be the Jericho to which we sometimes dismiss "friends" whose presence we do not absolutely require. How often have I wished one and another of my acquaintances—I will not say my enemies—"in Jericho"! It is the general limbo to which we consign all bores and un-

comfortable people. And now I was "in Jericho" myself. It is not surprising that I was rather impatient to get out of it. So we hastened on through the town, to some spot where we could enjoy the beauty of nature. This we found close under the cliffs which form a background for the plains, from the foot of which gushes what bears the suggestive name of the Fountain of Elisha. The fountain is a full one, discharging such a volume of water as keeps a stream flowing, which is carried through the gardens and orchards.

On the bank above this fountain we pitched our tents, glad to rest after a day of great fatigue, rendered more oppressive by the over-powering heat. It was a grateful change to sit in our tent door in the cool of the day, and listen to the murmur of the fountain under our feet. The sun had sunk behind the hills, and now the moon, which we had seen as a pale crescent hanging over the Moslem camp at Nukhl, had grown in fulness, and crept upward in the heavens till it hung directly over our heads. How it softened the outline of the mountains of Moab, and even threw a misty veil over the wretched town, slumbering under its dense foliage!

We had been told that one of the things to see, or rather to hear, at Jericho, was the peculiar music of the people, who had some rude native airs, to which they chanted a song and executed a kind of war dance. Not wishing to miss an opportunity to hear some real Arab music—a thing we had not heard in all our wanderings on the desert—we sent for these singers, and about eight o'clock some twenty of them, men and women and children, marched up to the front of our tent, and standing in a line, began their unique performance, which consisted of a quick motion of all together, swaying their bodies and swinging their arms up and down, keeping time to these

movements with a kind of grunt. While this went on, the leader flourished a drawn sword in their faces, it being a point of skill to come as near as possible without touching them. Every few moments one or another would quit the ranks and rush up to me with a piercing shriek and yell, which they hissed in my very ears. After a few moments I thought I had had enough of this "concert," and told the dragoman that he might tell them the Howadji was satisfied. "What shall I give them?" I asked; to which Yohanna, who always liked to play the prince with other people's money, replied in a careless sort of way "Give them a napoleon—four medjidies" (Turkish dollars); to which I immediately responded by handing over the money, which was probably four times what any one used to the ways of the country would have given. "A fool and his money are soon parted." It is in this way that "high art" is patronized by travellers in the land of the East. The fellows went off in great glee, probably thinking they had caught "a green one." I heard them shouting all the way down to Jericho. However, I was glad to have them depart, much better pleased with a chorus which now filled my ears, and which was genuine, home-made music. It was the croaking of the frogs, which rose up from all the plain, and in which there was more music than in the throats of all the Arabs from here to Mount Sinai.

While this was going on, the muleteers had been sitting round their camp fires, smoking their pipes. At length the fires burned low, and they dropped off to slumber, while we lay down in our tent, with the flood of moonlight pouring over us, and the sound of rushing waters to lull us to rest.

CHAPTER XXIV.

GOING UP TO JERUSALEM.

It was our last night in tents before reaching Jerusalem, and we were to mount but for one more ride. We could not miss such an opportunity to see the sun rise over the mountains of Moab, and were up long before daybreak, watching the approach of the dawn. The weather, which had been propitious through all our journeying on the desert, favored us to the end. The sun came up without a cloud, and shone down into the plain of the Jordan and the Dead Sea. Looking out upon the landscape in this morning light, one could see how it was that this natural basin once supported a large population, and became the seat of one of the great cities of the East. The valley of the Jordan at this point is eight miles broad—a breadth as great as that of the valley of the Nile above Cairo; and here on its western border rose a city of such splendor that after the Roman conquest Antony did not think it an unworthy gift to offer to Cleopatra, who in turn sold it to Herod, then governor of Judea. However little claim Herod may have had to the title of "Great" (although Augustus recognized him as "the second man in the Empire," inferior only to himself), he had at least one Imperial taste—that for architecture, as he showed in the rebuilding of the Temple. Jericho furnished him a Winter retreat when he fled from the cold heights of Jerusalem; and here he built a palace, where he could take refuge, and find under his palms the Summer warmth

and mildness that he might have found on the banks of the Nile. All is gone now, as much as the walls of the earlier Jericho, which fell before the rams' horns of the priests in the army of Joshua. Nature only remains—nature and history—for "the past at least is secure," and here, as at the Pyramids, if not "forty," over thirty "centuries look down upon us." On the crest of yonder mountains, we still discern the figure of Moses; while in the valley below, more than a thousand years afterward, was heard "the voice of one crying in the wilderness," and "John came preaching repentance and baptism for the remission of sins": and nearer still, the range at whose very foot we are camped, bears the name of Quarantana, from the belief, once commonly accepted, that it was the mountain of the temptation, where our Lord after His baptism, and before He entered on His ministry, spent forty days of fasting in the wilderness. Thus do the Law and the Gospel look across the plain of the Jordan, as if signalling to each other from the tops of the mountains.

While we were thus musing on the scene, the tents were struck, and the muleteers brought us our horses. Our last ride was not to be a solitary one: for there were two or three parties that had come down from Jerusalem, and camped near us, and we mounted together. Among them was a company of Frenchmen whom we had met at Mount Sinai, and afterwards at Bethlehem, who were so intelligent and courteous that I felt quite sure the young men must be scions of some old Legitimist families, who, under the direction of a chaplain (there was a priest in the company), were strengthening their faith by a visit to the Holy Places of the East. We met them frequently during the Holy Week in Jerusalem, and were confirmed in our impression. They were well mounted and well armed, though they did not omit the precaution

of taking a guide, whose presence was a pledge of their safety, as he was the son of the sheikh of the tribe of Bedaween who claim the wilderness of Judea as their own. Thus breaking camp, one after another our several parties went pricking across the plain to the foot of the hills.

Before we turn our horses' heads to begin the ascent, a singular monument in the distance arrests our attention. As it lies in the direction of the Dead Sea, and is glaring white—it shines like crystal in the morning sun—we might fancy it to be Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt. But no, it looks more like a tomb, and indeed a tomb it is—a shrine which is held in great reverence by the Moslems, as it well may be, considering that it is the tomb of no less a personage than Moses himself! The tomb of Moses? But is it not written that Moses died on Mount Nebo, and that "no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day"? Ah yes, so it *was*, but so it is no longer. That was said in Old Testament times, when the world did not yet know all the miracles of faith and of credulity. As Sgnarelle says, in the play of Molière, the Medécin Malgrè Lui, to one who timidly suggests that "the heart is on the left side of the body, and the liver on the right": "Yes, it was so formerly, but we have changed all that." So with Moses. It is true he died on Mount Nebo, and no man knew of his sepulchre, but of course *Moses knew himself;* and if not comfortable where he was, or if any religious purpose required it, could remove at his will. Accordingly he rose out of his sepulchre, probably in the darkness of the night, and stole down the mountain side and across the plain, to put himself in a positior to receive the homage of the faithful, the proof of which is, that at this very moment I see his tomb on a hillock yonder; and since the tomb of Moses is there, it were a wretched unbeliever who should dare to suggest that the body of Moses is not in it! Such is the story of the

Moslems. I may not have given it precisely, but it was something not less ridiculous. The Bible account was well enough in its day, but the Moslems have "changed all that," and now they have the body of Moses just where they want it for their own purposes, and what those purposes are is quite evident—it is to make a shrine that should excite Moslem devotion. They saw how the pilgrimages to Jerusalem reanimated the spirit of Christian believers; how it strengthened their faith and kindled their zeal. As a counterpoise to this influence, which they knew not how to resist, some wise old Mollahs, who lived here six hundred years ago, hit upon the happy expedient of setting up a shrine of their own, which should have equal attractions with that of the Holy Sepulchre. For this it was only necessary to have the potent name of a prophet as a spell to conjure by, and who so great as "My Lord Moses," whose name was held in reverence alike by Moslems, Jews, and Christians? To make the opposition more effective, they fixed the time of pilgrimage in the Holy Week, when the Christians should be thronging the streets of Jerusalem; so that at the very moment that they were coming in at the Jaffa gate on one side, the Moslems should be coming out at St. Stephen's gate on the other. We shall meet crowds of them on our way this morning.

Leaving the tomb of Moses, we turn up the mountain side. The air of the hills stirs our blood, and we quicken our horses' steps. But whoever comes up this road should not ride so fast as not to pause now and then, and turn back to take one more look at a landscape, which he will remember for a life-time.

We are now on one of the great roads of Palestine, which in ancient times, as it led directly to the heart of the country, often resounded with the tramp of armed men.

By this passage entered many an Eastern invader, "coming up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan." But we are just now more interested in following the track of pilgrims than of conquerors. By this road the tribes went up to Jerusalem to the Passover. Not only was it the avenue of communication between Jerusalem and Jericho, but between the tribes on the two sides of the Jordan. It was the road which would be taken by those who crossed the Jordan to come up to the annual feasts. As we begin the ascent, we recall the scenes two thousand years ago, when the Jews thronged up these mountain steeps, singing as they went the Songs of Degrees: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help"; "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord: Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee: Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces"; "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth forever"; "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore."

These festivals, by bringing the tribes to the capital, strengthened the national as well as the religious feeling, and, in a double sense, made them one people. In those days there were none of the resources of modern civilization to bring the ends of a country together—no railroads coursing through the valleys and over the mountains, no telegraphs to flash signals from tribe to tribe. The tribes were as widely separated as nations are now. Those on the opposite sides of the Jordan were as far asunder as England and France are to-day, separated by the British Channel. But at the annual feasts the people came, not only from

Judah, which was nigh to Jerusalem, but from Simeon in the South to Dan in the North; from the sea-coasts of Asher and Zebulon and Naphtali; and from Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh, on the other side of the Jordan. Hither they flocked from every direction—not men alone, but whole families, husbands and wives, with their little ones—to share in the general rejoicing. Those who came from beyond Jordan, crossed the plain, and as they began to mount the hills, they sang the psalm of David: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?" Thus was their Religion associated, not with sadness, but with joy. The feasts were times of national rejoicing, when Ephraim did not envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim, but all joined together, singing the anthems of their common deliverance. These festivals were the great events of the year—which made the people feel that they had a country, that they were children of a common race, inheritors of a common faith, and sharers of a common joy.

These ancient Jewish festivals are no more; though the few thousand Jews in Jerusalem still keep the Passover, yet the Temple is gone, and there is no splendid ritual to attract the pious Jew, nor is there a large population—the remnant of the tribes—to send a throng of pilgrims to the solemn feasts. But Christian festivals have taken the place of the Jewish; to the Passover has succeeded the Holy Week, the great season of celebration by the Christian world, for which pilgrims are now hastening to the Holy City. As we press on, they gather before us and behind us, swelling the train. Numbers are on the road, some on horseback and some on foot. The latter we pass quickly, while others who are better mounted than we, dash by us at full speed. Here is a rider who belongs to the "awkward squad," as he comes up with legs flapping

like a pair of wings, and saddle-bags on his lank beast, looking like a country doctor. I think he is a German professor. Russians are here in great numbers. The costumes and the languages of the East mingle with those of the West. Thus the pilgrims move forward, a promiscuous crowd, yet all with one destination—"going up to Jerusalem."

Half way up the ascent is laid the scene of the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Although Christ merely supposed a case for illustration, yet tradition could not miss such an opportunity, and accordingly it is accepted as a veritable occurrence, and we have even pointed out to us the place of the inn to which the Good Samaritan conveyed the poor wayfarer, and left him to be cared for. One thing strikes us in this as in other parables of our Lord—the felicity and aptness in the choice of illustrations. "A certain man went down to Jericho and fell among thieves." Why to Jericho rather than to Joppa? It seemed to me, while riding over it, as if this were a road for highwaymen, as it is a lonely mountain road, with deep glens by the wayside where robbers might lurk, and wait the approach of the unsuspecting traveller. Indeed I fear if a lonely wanderer were to go down to Jericho to-day, unarmed and unprotected, he would meet the same fate.

But all the pilgrims are not going one way: as some are going up, others are coming down. We met great numbers of Moslems on their way to the tomb of Moses. They came, not in a long procession, but in families, or in little companies of friends, decked out in their finery, like Italian peasants for a *festa*, and driving before them sheep and goats for sacrifices and for food during the three days of their festival. Here and there a booth served the purpose of a wayside inn, and invited pilgrims of all races and all creeds. We declined their alluring temptations

but made our own repast on a rising ground by the roadside, where, with sheltering rock behind and a smooth sward in front, we watched the picturesque cavalcade (for some mounted on horses and camels mingled with those on foot), which went streaming down to the valley of the Jordan.

But all associations of ordinary pilgrims sink out of sight in the thought of one solitary Traveller. The supreme interest of this road from Jericho is that it was trodden by our blessed Lord when He came up to Jerusalem for the last time. Looking backward and downward, we seem to see a Form slowly ascending, with weary foot, as of one who bore a heavy burden, and on whom already fell the shadow of the cross.

As we advance, these associations thicken upon us, until we come to Bethany, so full of tender and sacred memories. Here we are, as it were, in the very home of our Saviour, almost as much as if we were in Nazareth or Capernaum : for Bethany is only two miles from Jerusalem, and the house of Mary and Martha was His frequent retreat from the great city. We turned our horses into a lane, and rode through the poor village to visit the tomb of Lazarus, which is under ground, and to which we descend by a stair in the rock. We have come to distrust monkish legends so much that we are suspicious of any which rest merely on tradition, unsupported by evidence ; yet the bare possibility that here tradition has seized on the right spot, is enough to hush to silence the visitor who gropes into the darkness, and stands, it may be, at the very grave's mouth where "Jesus wept," giving way to a burst of emotion such as overwhelms a mourner who bends over the tomb which has received the object dearest to him on earth. Another spot is pointed out as the place where stood the house of Mary and Martha. Both sites are

merely traditional. Nor does it matter. It is enough that they were in Bethany, of the identity of which there has never been a question. Somewhere, within a very short compass, they must have been; and as we move slowly along the road, we can see the Saviour approaching, met by a bowed form clinging to His knees, and hear a wail of agony: Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died!

And now we rise to the summit, and the Holy City bursts upon our view, just as we expected to see it—its walls giving it the appearance of a fortress, with deep valleys encircling it like a castle moat, and the hills girdling it round like outer defences of a central citadel. To get this eastern view was one object which we had in making our detour to the Dead Sea and the Jordan, instead of entering Jerusalem directly from Bethlehem. Dean Stanley—the writer who has caught most perfectly the picturesqueness, as well as the overwhelming historical associations, of "Sinai and Palestine"—says "There is one approach which is really grand, namely, from Jericho and Bethany. It is the approach by which the army of Pompey advanced—the first European army that ever confronted it—and it is the approach of the triumphal entry of the Gospels. Probably the first impression of every one coming from the North, the West, and the South, may be summed up in the simple expression used by one of the modern travellers: 'I am strongly affected, but greatly disappointed.' But no human being could be disappointed who first saw Jerusalem from the east."

On the hill commanding this view, we now stood over against the city, separated only by the Valley of Jehoshaphat—a valley so deep and frowning in its rocky sides that in the terrified vision of the Prophet, it was to be the scene of final judgment. ["Multitudes, multitudes

in the valley of decision!"] Mahomet caught the allusion and improved upon it. On yonder wall lies a long round stone, the fragment of a column, projecting from the parapet like a piece of artillery. On the day of final award, says the Koran, from that stone of judgment a line no bigger than a hair will be stretched, over which will pass the souls of the faithful, while unbelievers will be precipitated into the valley below, which is a symbol of the eternal abyss.

But we give only a glance downward, as our gaze becomes fixed on the city itself which has come so near. There is Jerusalem, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, the city of the great King! At the southeast corner within the walls, stood the Temple of Solomon (we are directly opposite the Beautiful Gate), and now stands the Mosque of Omar; and as we are at an elevation of nearly two hundred feet above it, we look down into the temple area.

Here, as before, one association overpowers all others—that of the Great Master, whose sacred presence has made all this holy ground. On our right is the Mount of Olives, to which He so often withdrew to meditate and pray; and as we see its position relative to Jerusalem, we can see why it may have been chosen as His place of retirement. It was close at hand, and yet separated by a deep valley, which protected it from intruders, as well as from the noise and tumult of the city. It was at once near and far—a place to be reached by a short walk, and yet as hushed and still as the mountain top to which He so often retired to pray.

Thus the most tender and sacred associations connected with the person of our Lord, may be said to cluster on the eastern side of Jerusalem. Over this road from the east, He passed on His way "going up to Jerusalem" to die;

and here when all was over, when death was past, He came to take farewell of His disciples. Of course legend is busy fixing on this or the other spot as the scene of the ascension. In one place they show the print of our Saviour's foot as He pressed the earth for the last time. But that is of little moment. This only we know, that it was from Bethany; and though we cannot fix the precise spot—though we cannot point to the print of His foot in a rock—yet as it was from one or other of these heights, all of which are near, it must have been within the sweep of the eye. "And he led them out as far as to Bethany; and he lifted up his hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." Was there ever a more simple announcement of a great event? In so few words is depicted that wondrous scene. With such simplicity throughout is told the story of our Saviour's life on earth. So brief a span is it from the beginning to the end—from the hill of Bethlehem to the hill of Bethany. If, as some pretend, the Gospel be all a myth, a poetic fancy, surely never was any poet's dream so perfect and complete—beginning with the song of angels, and ending with the flight to heaven! And what a harmony in all that life and death and rising again! Over his cradle the angels sang, Peace on earth, good will to men! And the last sight of him was in the act of blessing the disciples he left behind. So he came and so he went away: with hands stretched out in benediction, and words of blessing descending from the depths of air, till "a cloud received him out of their sight." No wonder that his disciples caught inspiration from that upward flight, "and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God."

With such thoughts we advance towards the city, descending the slope along which Christ made his tri-

umphal entry, when the multitude thronged his steps, and cast palm branches in the way, and shouted Hosannas. We heard no such glad salutations, but sounds quite other than those which welcomed the Prince of Peace: for at that moment cannon were firing at St. Stephen's gate, out of which was streaming a motley procession, with waving banners, beginning their march over the road by which we had come, to the Valley of the Jordan and the Tomb of Moses! It was a singular coincidence that Moslem pilgrims should be pouring out of Jerusalem just as Christian pilgrims were pouring in. With such a tumult before our eyes, and such a sound in our ears, we descended the slope and crossed the brook Kedron; and when we had climbed the opposite bank, and came under the old walls, and passed through the ancient portal, "our feet stood within thy gates, O Jerusalem."

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